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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"MANY THANKS FOR YOUR GOOD OPINION, DR. KILDARE!" SAID RAY'S ANGRY VOICE BEHIND THEM.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"So Dr. Kildare is coming back to-day!" says Grace Lucerna, tossing her pretty head disdainfully; "and if he gets all the joy I wish him I don't envy his lot."

Her sister Trif threads her needle with a bright-hued silk before she makes any response; then she remarks with great deliberation,—

"Of course he is to blame, but I think Ray the guiltiest of the two. I wonder she can settle down here. I should have fancied she wouldn't care to meet Psyche daily, knowing how she wronged her."

"How brave poor Psyche is!" exclaims in little Phoebe. "She won't confess she cares for Dr. Kildare, or admit that he is to blame."

"But he is, and in her heart she knows it. Why, they were all but engaged before Cousin Ray came amongst us; and then, man-like, he leaves Psyche for a fresh face, is caught by the glitter of golden hair, and the languor of blue eyes. For my own part, girls, I consider Psyche incomparably lovelier than Ray Kildare, for all her pink and white."

"Bah!" says Grace, impatiently. "I hate fair women, and I'm sure I show my generosity there, being fair myself. I would give five years of my life to change my yellow-brown hair and hazel eyes for Psyche's nut-brown mop (and it is a mop) and her dark eyes."

"You'll do very well as you are," remarks Trif, with huge condescension, "and you've a good complexion—not too much pink in it."

The sisters laugh out heartily at this candid criticism, and Grace blushes very prettily, and tries her best not to appear flattered.

"Nobody," she says, "would imagine Psyche and I are twins, we are so unlike; in fact, we seem a family made up of odds-and-ends. You,

Trif, with your brown hair and grey eyes, your sedate ways, might figure as a female Methodist parson!"

"Thanks," dryly. "I can't say I feel flattered. At twenty one doesn't care for left-handed compliments; but pray don't pay any regard to my feelings, but continue your conversation. My soul has so often been harrowed I am getting used to the sensation."

"Don't be an idiot, Trif. I was merely going to remark that Phoebe is the 'dear little dimpled darling' of the family—the sweet seventeen in whom novelists delight!"

Phoebe makes a disdainful moue.

"When you showed an unusual penchant for bread and sugar in your nursery days," laughs Trif. "What a horrid little gourmand you were, and how often I would have slapped you for breaking my toys if only I had dared!"

"What a frightful confession for the meek Tryphena to make! And you the prospective bride of a missionary! Well, if Arthur had chosen Phoebe I should have commended his taste."

She would have been such a plump morsel for the cannibals!"

"Perhaps he'll change his mind when he comes home," laughs Phoebe, wickedly. Then harking back to the old subject she says, "I wonder how Ray will be dressed, and if Harold is quite as pleased with her after a month of her caprices as he was before!"

"What I hate in Ray is her way of posing as an heiress. She talks of her eleven hundred pounds as though they were thousands. How condescending it is to know she will spend them all on herself. It seems impossible to me even now that Harold Kildare should love her."

"He doesn't; it is only a young man's fancy, and he'll live to repent it."

"There spoke the household prophet," draws Grace. "Well, I hope he will. And now, Trif, how shall you receive bride and bridegroom on their first call?"

"I shall be positively rude," breaks in Phoebe, "and I won't admire Ray's gown, even if it is perfection; and I shall say she looks awfully fagged after her tour. What will you do, Grace?"

"Oh!" rising, "I shall sweep across the room majestically—like this, girls; and I shall profess not to see the doctor's hand. 'I hope you are well,' I shall say, in a tone which will contradict my words, and will make him feel embarrassed. Then, after ignoring Ray altogether, I shall sink into the nearest chair and become engrossed in a book!"

"You are a couple of thoughtless children; and do you suppose Psyche would thank you for your pains! The wisest way will be to ignore the past—not Ray—not to show by word or look that you remember any little tenderness between Harold Kildare and Psyche, or that you resent his choice of a wife!"

"You're always right, Trif; and here are father and Psyche! She looks pale. I wonder if they passed the Kildares on the road?"

"It isn't improbable; their train was due half-an-hour ago."

Mr. Lucerne and his daughter cross the lawn together, and advance towards the open French window, Psyche lingering a moment to gather a handful of June roses. Entering, they are assailed by numerous questions, which Mr. Lucerne answers as best he may, and when he has ended the girl breaks in,—

"Oh yes! and we passed Milton Cottage on our way home; the happy pair had just arrived, and Dr. Kildare was assisting Ray from the chaise."

"A one-horse 'shay' isn't much of a conveyance for an heiress!" says Grace, with great animus. "How did she look, Psyche?"

"Beautiful!"

"I thought she did not seem very well satisfied with her home; her continental experiences would serve to make her discontented," says Mr. Lucerne. "She walked up the garden-path with the air of a queen!"

"Queens 'waddle' sometimes," interrupts Grace, irreverently; but her remark is received with an indulgent smile, and the Rector goes on as though he has suffered no interruption.

"Poor old Martha was waiting in the porch to welcome them, and Ray passed her with a curt nod. I am very much afraid Kildare has made a bad bargain!"

"I wish Ray had never come here," says Trif, darting a keen glance at Psyche; "isn't it difficult, father, to believe she is Uncle Bert's own daughter?"

Psyche moves to the window.

"Perhaps you are all misjudging her; she may have shown only the worst side of her nature to us, and she is lovely enough to bewitch any man."

She speaks quite quietly—quite steadily, with never a quiver of the tender mouth, or any added pallor on her pretty face, and when she has ended she takes up her hat and walks towards the door.

"Trif, I wish you would order tea a little earlier! My head aches, and I feel utterly fagged!"

"It shall be served in less than half-an-hour," and she watches the young, slight figure from

the room, sighing a little to herself, for Trif's heart is very tender and pitiful. If the Rector's daughters are not very complimentary or demonstrative to each other, they are all sincerely attached; and the sorrow which has fallen upon Psyche (and of which she never speaks) is felt very keenly by the other three.

Meanwhile Psyche has reached her room, and is sitting by the open window round which honeysuckle and June roses weave sweetest garlands; and the lovely young eyes are dim with unshed tears as they rest on the gables and chimneys of Milton Cottage—the home she had once thought to call her own. It is neither large nor pretentious, but there is no lovelier spot to her on earth; and now her cousin and rival reigns supreme there, and she is alone!

Only last January Harold Kildare had been her constant companion, until folks copied their names, and her sisters delighted to tease her about her "medicine man."

He had never told her he loved her; but are there not looks and tones infinitely more eloquent than words! She had been very happy then, envied by his protecting tenderness, and she looked forward to a busy life spent with him with as much joy as most girls feel at the prospect of boundless wealth and pleasure.

Then Ray Compton, her beautiful cousin, came to Wilford, and the Lucernes had welcomed her warmly, because she was an orphan. But from the hour of her arrival Harold Kildare changed—only the night before he had kissed Psyche when he said good-night, and whispered he should see her father in the morning. And the girl had gone to her room full of trembling, passionate joy.

But in the morning Ray burst upon him in all her blonde beauty, and he forgot to ask if the casket contained a jewel, being caught by the outside glitter.

Day after day Psyche waited for him to speak, and at last was compelled to admit to herself that he was learning to care for Ray. The girl was very brave, but her sisters read her secret, and hotly resented Harold's conduct, yet were afraid to say anything to Psyche.

Then one day the whole household was electrified by the Rector's announcement that Harold and Ray were engaged, and had asked his consent to an early marriage.

Mr. Lucerne had formed a very just estimate of his niece's character, and utterly refused to permit the wedding until she was "more sure of her own heart," and although the lovers chafed against his will they apparently submitted.

Perhaps if Ray had encountered no opposition, she would soon have wearied of her latest whim, as she had done of previous lovers, but the course Mr. Lucerne adopted roused her to violent opposition.

So one morning, a month before the commencement of this story, she drove to the nearest town with Harold, and was married. The young couple went away at once, perhaps because the bridegroom felt some degree of shame, and knew that the one blot on his hitherto stainless name was his treatment of Psyche.

It is of all these things that the girl is thinking as she sits with loosely clasped hands, and slightly parted lips. Once, in a sudden paroxysm of pain, she bows her face on her arms, moaning,—

"Oh, Harold! Harold! how can I bear it?"

But Trif's step is on the stairs, and once more the poor child calls her pride to her aid, and, catching up a book, appears to be wholly engrossed by it. But Trif is not deceived, and there are tears in her true eyes as she lays her hands on Psyche's shoulders.

"It is hard for you, my dear!" she says, tremulously. "I wish I could suffer for you."

Under this unwonted tenderness Psyche almost breaks down.

"Don't, Trif; anything is easier to bear than sympathy. Let me alone a moment."

"I wish I could punish him as he deserves," cries the other, clenching her little hands. "It is small mercy he would receive, even though he pleaded as eloquently as Demosthenes."

"Why will you persist in blaming him?"

passionately. "If I was fool enough to think he loved me, and to grow to care for him, was it his fault? Perhaps I showed him too plainly that I—that I was not indifferent to him, and men don't like to be pursued."

"Oh, Psyche! as if you could pursue any man; and he gave you just cause to believe he cared for you."

"Say no more on the subject; and please remember I have forgotten all. Now let us go to tea."

"But," urges Trif, "they will call on us to-morrow. Shall you see them?"

"I! Oh, yes! Why not? I am all anxiety to offer my congratulations personally. Oh!" with a little hysterical laugh. "I wonder how Ray will manage with her small staff of servants? What a hash she will make of the cooking! I think I shall volunteer to take that part of the work off her shoulders—just out of consideration for Dr. Kildare's digestion!"

She runs downstairs, and delights her father with her quaint conceits and merry jests; but Grace, looking at her steadily, says, with good-natured satire,—

"Well, if my headaches had such an effect on my spirits as yours have, I would pray for one every day."

"Grace! Grace!" remonstrates the Rector, "how flippantly you talk!"

"Just as a set-off to your profound conversation, my dear," she retorts, with a laugh.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the Kildares pay their visit to the Rectory Psyche is out, for which fact Harold is devoutly thankful. But the following day, as he is driving slowly home, to his intense embarrassment he sees her coming towards him. But the girl is quite prepared to meet him, and advances, smilingly.

"I am so sorry I was out when you called!" she says, brightly. "It was such a disappointment to me not to see Ray. I shall make a point of coming to the Cottage this afternoon."

"Do," he answers, confusedly, wondering if, indeed, he has not hurt her. Looking into the sweet flushed face and clear eyes, he is inclined to believe not. "Ray feels lonely after our gay time, and I think she misses you all more than she cares to say. And I am so much from home that it is dull for her."

"Naturally. How well you are looking! Ray evidently takes excellent care of you. Now I am going to Granny Fletcher's, so must not stay here gossiping. Good-bye! Tell Ray to expect me early."

Satisfied that he has not touched her heart the young doctor drives off, unconscious of the wild, wet eyes which watch his going, and deaf to the sweet, sad voice sighing out his name to the west wind.

Just now he is very content with his lot; very proud of his beautiful young wife, and he imagined that she is all he has painted her—sweet and loving as she is beautiful, that she will fill and crown his life with all good things. Whilst the glamour of her beauty still holds him captive—whilst she is still tender in ways and speech—he does not realise that his so-called love is really no more than "a young man's fancy," and he does not guess how near the awakening is.

A month passes by and one morning, as Ray lounges in her chair reading the latest novel, Martha thrusts in her head.

"If you please, ma'am, what'll you give the doctor for dinner?"

"Oh, I don't know, Martha; please yourself."

"I've made all the dishes as I know on," says Martha, advancing now; "and I guess he's pretty well tired on 'em, though for good plain cooking there ain't no one can beat me. But I can't manage custards and them sort o' things, and I thought, maybe, you'd do that part o' the business."

Ray lifts her forget-me-not eyes to the old woman's.

"You must look in your cookery-book, Martha, I am mistress here—not cook."

"Well, I never!" says Martha, with uplifted hands. "Miss Psyche ain't too proud to make anything—no nor none of your cousins, ma'am, asking your pardon for being so bold. I've seen 'em mend and make their own frocks, and toss up beds—"

"That will do, Martha; you presume too far on your position here!" The old woman goes, noisily closing the door behind her.

"Presume too far, do I, ma'am?" she mutters. "Praps I do for your likin'; but master won't turn me off; no, not even to please you. Ah! why couldn't he be content with Miss Psyche! She's the beautifullest and best o' ladies as I know on!" and, sighing deeply, she returns to the kitchen.

Between Ray and this honest faithful servant there is an unspoken antagonism, and more than once has the young wife insinuated that Martha is too old for service, and her place should be filled by an abler woman with more modern ideas. But to this Harold will not listen.

"It would kill her, my darling, to be thrust out of the cottage. She has lived here ever since she was fourteen."

"And may remain until she is fourscore," pouts Ray. "And—and she is so insolent."

"Oh," smiling, "it is her way; poor old soul, she means no ill!"

But his defence of Martha angers her more than she dare confess, and her manner towards the old servant grows daily more arrogant, until Martha is heard to say she hates her.

"Tain't no manner o' use tryin' to please her," she says, one day, to Grace. "She's more fancies than a spilt child, and more airs nor a peacock!"

"Of course she has," responds that young lady, cheerfully. "And she is as selfish as she can be. We are all heartily ashamed of her; even father, and you know he always tries to think the best of people."

"Yes; but she jest turns the young men clean daft. Why there's that young squire, Colin Renfrew, says she's the loveliest woman for miles around; and, beggin' your pardon, miss, I don't know where his eyes are. Lor' bless you, you can buy hundreds o' dolls as good-lookin' as her at any toy shop."

Grace laughs lightly.

"I can see she is no favourite with you, Martha," and nodding her good-bye, she walks briskly home. "And I will say," she remarks, after confiding this conversation to Phoebe, "I will say that Ray might be content, and leave the single men to us. There aren't many eligible young fellows round here, and there's a wonderful and fearful quantity of women!"

"Are you afraid of being an old maid, Grace? Believe me, my dear, you may hope a little longer yet; at nineteen one doesn't generally despair."

Shortly after this conversation Ray is announced. She finds no one but Psyche in the room (Grace and Phoebe having flown at the sound of her voice), and advances with outstretched hands.

"My dear, I am so pleased to find you alone. I have come to ask such a very great favour of you!"

"I shall be glad to grant it," quietly, "if indeed it is in my power to do so."

"Oh, it is; and you are so good-natured, I had no hesitation in coming to you. Martha tells me that Harold used to admire your cooking, and I thought, perhaps, you would teach me to make his favourite dishes. I am so lamentably ignorant."

"I shall be glad," Psyche answers, feeling pleased that at last Ray was learning to consult her husband's tastes. "I will come up to-morrow morning."

"Thanks, awfully, dear; and let us keep our little plot secret from him until I have mastered all the terrible details. I want to surprise him."

Her request seems very natural to Psyche, who is by no means suspicious, and she does not think it necessary to enlighten her sisters as to the reason for her frequent visits to Milton Cottage. But she is considerably surprised by Ray's conduct!

On the first morning she makes her appearance in the kitchen, wearing a white lace apron trimmed with pale blue ribbons, and Martha eyes her with great disfavour.

"Lor'! missus, you ain't goin' to cook in that gimcrack thing! It ain't no mortal use. Why don't you wear a sensible thing like Miss Psyche's!"

Ray disdains to answer, and seating herself, watches Psyche rapidly preparing custards, jellies, and other delicacies. At last she remarks, with an affected yawn,—

"Upon my word, coz, you should have been born a grade lower. Your vocation is certainly cooking. As for me, I am perfectly helpless."

"Never said a truer word in your life," mutters Martha, sotto voce.

The next morning Ray does not appear at all, and when Psyche goes to summon her, says sadly,—

"My dear little soul, I shall never do anything great, and shall be unfeignedly thankful if you will cover up my imperfections. As you will have the work, so shall you have the credit."

"It is not that I wish," Psyche says, in a troubled way; "and really, Ray, you should do your best, for I may not always be able to assist you."

"We will trust to Providence, my dear," carelessly. "It's useless to worry oneself about a thing which may never happen. You aren't going to be married, are you?" with covert scorn, because she is not unmindful of Harold's former penchant for Psyche.

"Not just yet," lightly. "When the time arrives you shall not remain in ignorance."

Psyche does not know that her dainty dishes are presented to Dr. Kidare as the work of his wife's fair fingers, or she might be a little indignant that Ray receives his praises so calmly. But Martha listens as she waits at table, and determines soon or late to rout the enemy.

One day she brings in a specially good *blanc mange*, and with the freedom her master allows her, says,—

"Miss Psyche's reg'lar beat herself to-day. She's as good as a French cook!"

"What do you mean, Martha?" inquires the doctor, who is tempted to believe her crazy.

"Lor', now!" she ejaculates, with sham regret, "what a stupid old woman I am. I thought as how you knew 'twas Miss Psyche what makes all these beautiful dishes! I'm sure I ask your pardon, ma'am, if I've blurted out a secret," and hurrying from the room she gave vent to low, but hearty laughter. "I've paid one off the score then!" she says to herself; "there ain't many can beat me at that."

Harold turns to Ray.

"Is it true?" he asks, more sternly than she has ever heard him speak. "And you have not only imposed upon her, but taken all praise to yourself? I hate deceit in any form."

She finds some way to pacify him, but from that day his trust in her is less assured; and knowing this she bitterly resents it. She begins, too, to find her quiet life very irksome, to long for excitement.

She finds that she is but a very insignificant member of society, despite all her beauty and her undoubted grace.

And as summer merges into autumn, and autumn into winter, she grows to loathe the little village, to hate the tiny, dainty home her husband had prepared for her.

She grows fretful and impatient, but Harold is very tender with her; perhaps he sees how frail and shallow her nature is, and pities her. But he is less anxious to reach home when the day's duties are ended, less anxious to be alone with the petulant woman who perpetually teases him to leave Wilford and practise in London.

"But, my dear," he urges, "here we have a certain income—"

"And a wretched one," she retorts. "Many a banker's clerk earns more than two hundred and fifty a year. I am sick of the country and our homely way of living. Let us go away."

"My darling Ray! just now you are not quite yourself, and you take a doleful view of everything. When the spring comes you will

be brighter and stronger, and quite ready to laugh at your own laments."

But when the spring comes—and her baby is born she grows more petulant still. She is essentially an unwomanly woman, and when they tell her that the child lives, her first thought is that her own expenses must be reduced, that little luxuries must be foregone, little pleasures fore-sworn; and hiding her face in her pillows she sobs bitterly.

Later, Psyche steals into her room, and with tearful eyes and tender voice tells her the little one has passed away quietly. She has expected wild cries and laments, but to her horror Ray seems more relieved than otherwise.

Perhaps it is now that the last germs of esteem for her dies out of Harold's heart; perhaps, never until this bitter hour does he recognise the awful shallowness of her nature, her meanness, her utter inability to understand him.

He is paying dearly for his fancy, and knowing that he himself is only to blame for his misery, he is most tender to her.

But she does not care now to please him; she has wearied of him and her quiet home, as years ago she wearied of her toys; she has no literary or artistic tastes, and Harold's pursuits fall to interest her.

So when an invitation from an old school-friend urging her to visit her arrives she is most anxious to go.

"Oh, Harold!" she says, ecstatically, clasping her hands, "I must go. I have always longed to spend a season in town, and never had such an excellent opportunity as this. Mrs. Rawson is immensely rich, and moves in the best society. I am quite sure you can spare me. Martha can manage so nicely when she chooses."

The young husband sighs. Is he thinking of the fair, sweet woman he might have called his own, and who in his mad folly has so cruelly forsaken? Who can tell! But he answers quietly,—

"How long do you purpose staying, Ray?"

"Why, Milly invites me for three months. They will soon pass. Say I may go!"

"Please yourself, Ray; they will be very dull months to me."

"Oh!" carelessly; "you must go down to the Rectory; the girls will amuse you."

He turns away sick at heart.

"Oh, fool! fool that I am!" he mutters. "It was for her I forsook Psyche!"

CHAPTER III.

So Ray goes to town, and Harold stays on alone at the Cottage. Old Martha is fiercely indignant at the "mistress's conduct," and does her best to make Harold comfortable. But her faithful old heart bleeds to see the great change in him. He grows careworn and haggard, his eyes have a dissatisfied look, and his whole manner is expressive of weariness.

He would go to the Rectory if he dared, but he is afraid of his reception there now Ray is from home, and deep in his heart is the knowledge that it would not be well to see much of Psyche. His fancy for his wife has died out—it might have lived and blossomed into real love had Ray been a womanly woman—but now the old and tender devotion has revived, and he hates himself, because at heart he is false to the wife of his choice.

Oh, fool, and blind! not to distinguish between the gem and the sparkling imitation!

Day after day he fights with his love; night after night, tossing on his bed he tells himself he will forget, and then calls on Psyche's name with terrible anguish. Surely now the girl is revenged. His suffering trebles hers, for is he not the victim of a fruitless remorse? Does he not know he has ruined his whole life's happiness? Truly he is paying dearly for his folly.

Weeks come and go, and folks gossip amongst themselves about the doctor's wife, and are not sparing in the epithets they hurl upon her. They remark on Harold's worn look, his utter weariness, his seclusion from society.

"Ah!" says Martha to an old crony, "his

wedding was the one mistake of his life; he ought to have married Miss Psyche—not but all the vicar's girls are good 'uns—but this woman!—there it beats me what he sees to love in her, for she's all the world like a spoiled child; and when she's in her tantrums (and that's pretty often) she's a regular fiend!"

One day Harold meets Phoebe, and with a blush she stretches out her pretty plump hand to him.

"Dr. Kildare, this is shameful! We have not seen you for three whole weeks, except at church; and then, as you sit in front of us, we don't find it very exciting to study the shape of your head or the nape of your neck! Why have you deserted us so entirely! What have we done!"

"I was afraid I should be regarded in the light of an intruder!" he says, smiling down at the pretty, dimpling face. "I know it is not for any merit I possess that I have ever been welcome!"

"If we treated men according to their merits they would fare very badly indeed!" she retorts, with a saucy little laugh. "But do come up to-night; you are really looking awfully fagged, and Ray will thank us for taking care of you!"

He thinks bitterly that his wife cares less than nothing what becomes of him, but he answers cheerfully,—

"I'll come. Perhaps you will give me a little music; and, Phoebe, you don't know how fully I appreciate your kindness!"

"Oh, nonsense! We shall be glad to have you. We get so unutterably bored with each other's society sometimes, it will be quite a deed of charity to enliven our evenings. Good-bye; bring up your favourite songs!"

When she has disappeared and he has time for thought, he rates himself soundly for consenting to go where temptation awaits him, but none the less, as evening comes on, he finds himself entering the hospitable doors of the Rectory.

He is received cordially by Trif and Phoebe, distantly by Grace; and then, as Psyche comes forward his heart beats madly against his side, and his haggard face grows paler, but she is very quiet, very calm.

"Father will be so sorry to lose your society. He has gone to visit a sick woman, and we must do our best to supply his place."

He cannot tell what she says, he is so wildly and deliciously happy to be near her once again, to look into the clear depths of those wonderful brown eyes. Oh! how could he ever have failed her! Now, there is not a hair of her head that is not precious to him.

Clearly, he must not come here again, the anguish and temptation are too great. He moves and speaks to-night like one in a dream, and Grace is glad, thinking to herself, "After all, he is unhappy; he loves Psyche still, and longs for the quiet evenings we used to have."

The girls play and sing to him; that is, Grace and Psyche do—the others have no musical talent.

"Oh!" says Trif, when asked once to sing, "I never yet heard of an owl's voice being admired, and mine is such an unmistakable hoot that I'll spare you the infliction of hearing it. Phoebe and I like music but we can't make it. Her voice is as big as a tom-tit, and her playing is one sweetly sustained thump. I don't play."

Once, when Grace is giving them a tender and perfect rendering of Mendelssohn's song without words, Harold walks towards Psyche, who is standing at the open window. She is wearing a white dress with a cluster of purple panicles at her throat and waist, and despite her pallor has never been so lovely to the young man as now. She turns to him with a faint smile, and her sweet calm eyes meet his fearlessly.

"When did you hear from Ray last? And is she having a good time?"

"Yesterday, and she is positively wild with delight over her successes. She tells me that Mrs. Rawson cannot possibly spare her until the close of the season," and here a note of bitterness unconsciously creeps into his voice.

The girl beside him is not deaf to it, and her heart aches for him, but she says very gently,—

"Ray is young and very beautiful. One scarcely wonders she finds her visit so pleasant."

"You are an angel, Psyche!" he cries, quickly. "Few women would excuse her wanton neglect of her home and me."

"Hush! I cannot listen to such words," a suspicion of anger in her young sweet voice. "She is your wife; you chose her from amongst all the women you knew to grace your name. If now you are dissatisfied, at least be courageous enough to hide your pain and discontent."

He stands looking sorrowfully down at her, such love, such pain in his eyes that her own fill with tears, and she averts her face that he may not see how deeply grieved she is for him.

"You are right," he says, after a pause. "You always are. I justly deserved your rebuke."

Grace is still playing, Trif and Phoebe have sauntered into the garden. Just for a few blissful, terrible moments he has her to himself, and his tongue seems tied. He may not speak of the past, he will not think of the future, and he is unfeignedly relieved when Psyche says,—

"You have told me scarcely anything about Ray. Don't you think you are very remiss!" and now she is smiling at him.

"Of course I am. Well, first and foremost she has met an old friend—young Colin Renfrew. He has just finished his University career, and is having "a good fling" in town. After the season closes he intends coming home. It is time the Hall was reopened; it must be four years now since it was occupied."

"Yes, I shall be glad to see Colin, he was always a nice lad, and we were great friends. I suppose he is considered of some importance in 'society' now!"

"That is beyond doubt. You see he has a princely income, an ancient name, and a prepossessing person. He will hardly pass a season unwatched, when there are so many matchmaking mammae and worldly daughters to cope with."

"I hate to hear you speak so!" the girl says, passionately. "For your dear mother's sake, and by the reverence you owe her, don't drop into that detestable habit of traducing women."

"I declare," says Trif's voice behind them, "you two are quarrelling! Who or what is the bone of contention?"

"We are not quarrelling, Miss Lucerne; I am undergoing a severe lecture upon my shortcomings," says Harold, lightly; and satisfied that he is indulging in no reminiscences of the past Trif moves away again. But, fearful of further interruptions, he seizes this opportunity for further speech with Psyche.

"I behaved badly to you not so long ago," he says, hurriedly, "and none but a generous woman would forgive me as you have done. Thank Heaven I did not wound you!" (he does not see the quick clapping of her little hands, or he might not be quite so sure of this). "And now your very goodness emboldens me to ask further mercy from you. If sometimes you would let me come here at night—the very atmosphere of this house does me good—am I asking too much?"

"Indeed, no," very quietly; "we shall always be pleased to see you."

The music suddenly ceases, and Grace asks, languidly,—

"When is Ray coming home?"

"I cannot tell, Miss Grace, but it will not be for some weeks yet."

"Ah! Don't you find it lonely? And isn't it rather strange for a young wife to run off to town for an indefinite period? Folks are apt to talk, especially in villages."

It is in vain Psyche glances entreatingly at her. The girl is determined to repay Harold in a measure for the pain she knows he has made Psyche suffer; and she goes on in the same languid way,—

"But Ray was always more fond of pleasure than home, and so soon wearied of persons or

things. She was always craving for change. Aren't you afraid, Dr. Kildare," with a little laugh, "that she may grow so in love with her freedom as to be unwilling to give it up?"

"No," he answers coldly, though a great fear stirs in his heart. "She will return presently, and I do not wish to shorten her term of enjoyment."

"What a model husband! And you always struck me as being such an impatient mortal. Perhaps as Colin Renfrew would say, you are being 'licked into shape.' What, are you going—so soon? Come again soon, and Psyche shall sing for you; she has been lazy this evening."

A moment his lost love's soft hand lies in his, and he looks into her face with a world of anguish in his eyes. Then he is out in the soft summer air, with the clear, starry sky above, and the odour of flowers around him. But his face is very dark—very stormy; is he not fighting against himself? Are not his good and bad angels striving together for mastery over him? Thank Heaven, the good angel conquers! Perhaps, in answer to a girl's prayer—a girl, who, standing at her lattice, prays with many tears that he may not fall from his nobler self—that at last peace and content may come to him.

Week follows week, and Ray's letters become less frequent until they almost cease; and when, indeed, they do arrive they are so constrained and brief that Harold tosses them aside with growing impatience and fear.

He thinks of all the weary years he may have to live—all spent with her—and wonders how he shall bear them; and at last he determines to go to town and bring her back; perhaps, because he dare no longer trust himself so much in Psyche's society.

With him to resolve is to do, and one night at the close of May he finds himself in Mrs. Rawson's hall. When the footman hears his name he is all courtesy, and informs him that Mrs. Rawson and Mrs. Kildare have gone to a great ball given by an American lady.

He furnishes him, too, with the address, and as Harold turns away from the house, runs down to the servants' hall to impart his news.

"I say, that stern-looking gent. is Mrs. Kildare's husband! It's doable strange the way those professional beauties keep their lords and masters in the background."

"Yes," assents the cook, with some acerbity, "if they was poor women they'd be all their bad. Lor', what a difference a fine name makes!"

Meanwhile, Harold hurries towards Mrs. Mitchell's, and is admitted without inquiry, despite his dusty clothes and evident air of having performed a long journey.

As he goes up the broad staircase, brilliant with flowers, the strains of dance music are borne towards him, and the haunting notes recall Psyche to his mind.

Angry with himself that this should be, he quickens his steps still more, and enters the ball-room, which is all ablaze with lights, and faint with the odour of many flowers, the fragrance exhaled from women's robes.

Then he begins to think he has done a foolish thing in coming here, and hesitates whether to advance or retreat. He has taken up his position behind some ferns and begonias. In front of him are two men chatting idly and criticising the dancers as they whirl by.

He begins idly to speculate upon Ray's greeting.

"Will she be glad or sorry to see him? Will she return willingly to the quiet home she loathed awhile ago? Would it be wiser to leave without seeing her?"

Before he can arrive at any decision some words uttered by one of the men before him arrest his attention.

"That young fool Renfrew is making himself conspicuous again with 'the Kildare.'"

"She is very lovely," says the other; "but what is her husband about to leave her so much to herself? She is the most notorious of married flirts this season."

Harold's brain seems to reel. Is it thus men speak of his wife, the woman to whose keeping he has entrusted his hitherto stainless name? A great wave of rage sweeps over him, a mighty

yearning to snap the bonds which hold him, to cut himself off for ever from his loveless wife, whose beauty has proved her only dower.

Then swift as lightning comes the thought that he has sinned even as she—if not in deed, at least in thought; that all his heart has gone from her; that he has returned to his old allegiance. He groans in spirit,—

"Heaven forgive me! Who am I that I should judge her!"

Then he listens again to the careless chatter of the two friends.

"I hear that 'the Kildare' is an heiress in her own right; that her husband is a country doctor of very small means (why the deuce did she marry him?) and Renfrew is a near neighbour of theirs."

"Then he will have ample opportunity to improve his friendship with the lady in question," retorts the other, with a disagreeable laugh. "By Jove! they are going to sit out the dance! Well, she is lovely enough to make that poor young beggar forget all but her charming self."

Harold's haggard eyes followed the other's gaze, and at last he sees a couple—who, indeed, may be easily mistaken for lovers—seated in an alcove, partly hidden by flowering plants. Can that woman be Ray? She is exquisitely dressed, and she has twisted a string of pearls in the meshes of her wonderful golden hair. All the man's heart dies within him as he looks at her; no modest woman, he thinks, would so lavishly display her neck and arms, even though they were dazzlingly fair.

And the deep blue eyes lifted to Colin's wear a warmer expression than Harold has seen in them for many long months. At a word from her companion she rises, and laying her hand upon his arm, walks with him to the conservatory.

"I wouldn't give much for Kildare's chance of happiness," says one man, and suddenly Harold issues from his hiding-place and confronts them.

"I beg your pardon," he says, in a strange, hoarse voice, "but I am a stranger here, and would be glad if you would point out Mrs. Mitchell to me. I have come on important business."

"That tall, fair woman in red is the hostess. I'll bring her to you. What name?"

"Kildare," shortly.

"Great Scott!" says the self-constituted messenger, "it is the man himself. I wonder how much he heard!" and he feels somewhat uncomfortable as he escorts Mrs. Mitchell to the spot where Harold stands; still more so when he finds his friend has basely deserted him.

Mrs. Mitchell looks a little surprised at the dusty, stalwart figure, the handsome, haggard face; then says, courteously,—

"I am very pleased to know you, Dr. Kildare, but I trust you do not bring ill-news for Ray!"

"I am afraid I do, since I come to take her home. Circumstances have occurred which necessitate her return to Wiford."

"Oh, he has heard nothing," thinks Mrs. Mitchell's escort, and moves away contentedly.

"I suppose you are anxious to see Mrs. Kildare at once. Shall I bring her to you?"

"No, thank you; I will beg your permission to find her myself."

"Certainly; I believe she is in the conservatory. After so long a separation you naturally will prefer to see her alone. Afterwards, pray allow the servants to get you some refreshments."

"Thank you, but I have no time to stay. I will find Mrs. Kildare, and then I am afraid we must take our leave at once."

So he quits her side, and full of rage and hate goes towards the conservatory, scarcely knowing how he shall greet his wife.

CHAPTER IV.

His first glimpses of the couple he is searching for is not calculated to soothe him.

Ray is seated in a low chair, and Renfrew is bending over her with the tenderness of an ac-

cepted lover. Evidently he is pleading for the flowers she wears at her breast, and she is toying coquettishly with them, and listening to his whispered words with flushed face and downcast eyes.

The watcher holds his breath a moment and wrestles madly with himself; then he steps out into the clear, soft light, cast by many-coloured lamps, and says, sharply,—

"Ray!"

She starts to her feet, all the lovely bloom fading from her cheeks, and a frightened look in her eyes. But if she is guilty so is he, and he will deal gently with her; and because he once dreamed he loved her, because she is so very frail he will not permit the man beside her to read his knowledge of their mutual faith.

He advances to her with outstretched hand.

"I have frightened you by my abrupt appearance, and ought to apologise (he smiles as he speaks, a smile which should have wrung a wife's heart to see); "but I find I cannot do without you any longer."

She has recovered herself now, and says, petulantly,—

"You should at least have written; I hate surprises. And have you forgotten Mr. Renfrew?"

He bows coldly to the young man, who looks confused and annoyed; then turning to his wife again, says,—

"Get your cloak, Ray, and let me take you back to Mrs. Rawson's."

"Now! Why, I have scarcely danced yet, and Mrs. Mitchell will be annoyed if I leave so early. Be a kind boy, Harold, and let me stay."

"No. Surely you have not seen so much of me lately that you are unwilling to accompany me! Mr. Renfrew, I believe Mrs. Kildare can now dispense with your escort."

Colin bows, then says nervously,—

"I hope you will not carry her off before Thursday. To-morrow a number of us were going down to Richmond."

"I am afraid I must play the part of a hard-hearted husband, and disappoint her. Come, Ray," and something in his manner compels her obedience.

Without a word he leads her to the cloak-room, and carefully wrapping her shawl about her, waits until she has spoken her adieux.

Mrs. Rawson comes to him.

"Surely you won't insist upon carrying Ray off; she is having such a divine time!"

"Doubtless; but there are limits even to my patience," with that same strange smile. "And forgive me, but we leave town together to-morrow."

"You will at least make my home yours until then!"

"Thank you, yes; and now I will not detain you longer. I have a cab waiting outside." Then as Ray returns he offers his arm, and leads her away.

Mrs. Rawson watches them a moment.

"I am glad he has come. Ray's flirtations are getting a little too pronounced; and he seems such a nice fellow, too!"

During the drive the young wife sits in sulky silence, utterly refusing any response to her husband's questions; and reaching her friend's house she runs up to the great drawing-room, but is immediately followed by Harold.

"I suppose," he says in low, measured tones, because of the great restraint he is imposing upon himself, "I suppose you know why I intend taking you away to-morrow!"

"Of course I do," she retorts, angrily. "You are envious of my enjoyment, and mean to end it."

"Is there no other reason, Ray?" with infinite sadness, and weariness of tone; and under his fixed regard she grows pale and trembles.

"Wife," very gently, "I have heard enough to-night to teach me your reputation is at stake. Men are speaking lightly of you, and your name once gone, what is there you can call your own?"

"What, indeed!" callously, "since you can give me neither rank nor money!"

"And these are dearer to you than love! Ray, have you ceased to care for me?"

"Yes," too angry to care what she says.

"Yes, I have; I wish I had never married you; I must have been mad. I am not fit for the life to which you condemn me. I love pleasure and wealth, and pretty clothes. I wish I were free! I would not sell my life a second time."

Harold's face is white and rigid as that of a corpse, as he grasps those soft white hands in his.

"If you mean all the bitter words you have said, I wish, indeed, that you were free!"

"That you might marry Payche Lucerne!" she questions, with a sneering laugh. "Do you suppose I forget you loved her once! I wish I had not come between you; but it was fun to steal away her lover!"

He is silent a moment, then, dropping her hands, he moves a little from her. She is stripped bare of all moral beauty now. He sees how worthless the soul is that is enshrined in such a glorious casket; and, strangely enough, his chief feeling is pity for her. But she mistakes his silence, and, seating herself with her back towards him, insolently announces her intention of remaining in town for the period for which she had been invited. In a sudden gust of passion Harold strides to her chair.

"Take care," he says, in a hard voice, "you must not go too far! And if you are incapable of protecting your honour and mine I must resort to extreme measures!"

She begins to sob. Often and often in the early days of their married life her tears have moved him to relenting, but he is disenchanted now, and she fails to alter his fixed resolve. Only he grows gentler again with her.

"Wife," he says, "let us try to begin a new life together; to bear with each other's weaknesses and errors!"—he lays his hands upon her shoulders as he speaks, but she flings them aside.

"Don't touch me!" she cries, fiercely. "I hate you!" and he falls back from her with a white, wild face. "I wish I had never seen you!" I am unfit for your humdrum life! Why was I fool enough to marry a country doctor, to consent to share your beggarly income! I, who can reign here by reason of my beauty!"

"Go to your room," he says, "and pack at once! We go home by the eight-thirty train!" and there is that in his manner which awes her into silence.

The next morning, despite all her remonstrances, he carries her home, and for the three following days she refuses utterly to leave her own apartments. In his despair Harold goes to Payche, and, confiding in her as much of the story as is necessary, begs her to reason with Ray. She shrinks from the task at first, but, in the end, he gains his desire.

She finds Ray alone, and as she enters her cousin thrusts a paper (apparently a letter) into her pocket, looking slightly confused.

"I hope you have come to condole with me," she says, in the voice of a martyr. "I was having such a glorious time, and Harold swooped down on me like the proverbial jealous husband, and carried me off in the most ill-bred way!"

"You had a long holiday," Payche urges, gently, "and doubtless he was lonely."

"Lonely! It was his inordinate selfishness that made him act so like a Goth! Why, how much of his society do I enjoy at any time! and I'm quite sure he prefers the Rectory to his own home!"

"You should not say that!" a trifle warmly. "Harold is not a capricious man; and, pardon me, Ray dear, do you make home quite as pleasant as you might?"

"I didn't marry him to amuse him; and, for pity's sake, don't preach. Stay to lunch—you will if you are charitable—and relieve the awful ennui of the meal?"

So Payche stays all day, and in the evening sings her newest songs to them, tells them the latest stories, but the cloud never lifts from Ray's face, and her manner is uniformly sullen.

When Harold invites her to inspect the newly made bed of geraniums she refuses most ungraciously. He bites his lip to keep down the bitter words that will rise, and goes into the garden with Payche.

His manner is strange, and his voice hoarse.

when he addresses her, and she knows he is moved almost beyond his powers of self-control. So, wishing to spare him, she talks gaily on different subjects, not waiting any reply, and she is startled when he turns to her and says suddenly,—

"Where is the use of prolonging the farce! Psyche, I can't go on with it! This life is killing all that is good in me! I asked you to visit her, hoping your goodness would wake some dormant kindness in her—now I ask you to stay away! Don't you see I can't bear your presence!—the contrast between you drives me mad!"

It is a pitiful, pale face which is lifted to his. "You chose your lot," she says, with infinite gentleness; "and you must be strong enough to bear it. Who knows but at last your persistent goodness may win her back to old ways, old love?"

"You do not know her," he says, bitterly. "She loves no one but herself!"

"Many thanks for your good opinion, Dr. Kildare!" says Ray's angry voice behind them. "I am flattered by it. And so, I am killing all that is good in you! Perhaps it is so; I only know that if your letters call you, mine have long wounded me. You see I made a sad mistake, a mistake which cannot be rectified. You played the spy upon me once, and to-night I emulated your example, and learn that the model husband loves another woman, that he is afraid to meet her daily, knowing what is in his heart!"

"Be silent, Ray!" Harold says, in a low, stern voice. "You don't guess to what sin you goad me!"

"Ah! yes—I know!" with a shrill laugh. "You would murder me if you dare, and marry that white-faced girl beside you!"

"Hush! hush!" cries Psyche, wildly. "You are beside yourself. You surely cannot mean all the cruel, bitter things you are saying! Ray, to-morrow morning you will be sorry for this exhibition of temper. Oh! do not offend Dr. Kildare beyond forgiveness—think a moment of his unflinching tenderness to you—"

"All of which has been undeserved," finishes Ray, satirically. "You do well to plead for your lover. You do well to encourage his attentions here—in my home, in my presence!"

"You wicked woman!" the girl breaks out, in a shamed and stricken voice. "Oh! you wicked woman! Does it hurt you that my name is pure? Must you misconstrue words and motives to suit your own vile ends? I will never enter your house again until you beg me to come—until you ask that forgiveness of me I shall find so hard to accord!" and before husband or wife can stay her she flies from the garden, out upon the road, towards the Rectory.

"Come, madam," says Harold, gripping Ray's white arm firmly. "Come in, I shall have something to say to you!"

In the days which follow Martha often hears Ray's voice raised in anger or sob, and she wonders at "master's patience" with her, for "sure she be the most aggravatin' critter as was ever born."

Then ominous letters begin to arrive, and Martha soon learns the blue envelopes enclose fresh demands for money, and that the "poor master is nearly daft with that woman's goin's on!"

But she does not know that in her brief visit to town Ray had spent all her little fortune, and, worse still, had drawn upon her husband's credit until ruin almost stares him in the face. He is confounded, and all his patience gives way under this last crushing blow; a terrible scene ensues, which Ray brings up to a climax by going into violent hysterics. The doctor leaves her writhing upon a couch, and meeting Martha,

says,—

"Go to your mistress, Martha. You know what remedies to use!" and he strides out of the house.

"Oh! ay," says the old woman, smiling to herself, "leave Martha alone for that. She ain't no more in hysterics than me!" and hurrying away she brings a bowl of water, which she uses most lavishly—so much so, that Ray's pretty dress is utterly spoiled; then she proceeds to

beat her hands and cheeks with no remarkable tenderness.

Ray sits erect with flashing eyes.

"You hurt me!" she says, and thrusts Martha away, "and you have spoiled my gown!"

"Lor! miss, my intentions was good. I thought as how you wanted bringing round. Dear, dear, what a clumsy old woman I am!" but when she is safely out of the room she stands with her hands on her hips chuckling with pleasure. "A few lessons like that 'ud do her good!"

As he goes on his rounds Harold ponders what he shall do to avert ruin, and at last concludes he must sell his life policy and throw the money to his wife's creditors as a sop. This he finally succeeds in doing, but it is but as a drop in the ocean of Ray's debts, and his heart falls him as he thinks the name of which he has been so justly proud is to be stained and smirched, trailed in the dust, ruined beyond redemption.

It does not relieve his anxiety to learn that Collin Renfrew is daily expected at the Hall, and he finds himself watching Ray intently endeavouring from her manner to learn if she is cognisant of the fact.

But she is so equable in ways and words, so careless of speech that he is quite at fault, and at length determines to know the truth by the adoption of bold measures. So one morning at breakfast he says,—

"Have you heard that Renfrew is expected almost hourly?"

"Yes, Martha was saying something to that effect yesterday. It will be a good thing for the village," and she meets his intent gaze so calmly that he is staggered.

"She looked as though she loved him that night I came upon them," he thinks. "Was she only fooling him! Great Heavens, that I should have married her—a soulless coquette, a woman devoid of sentiments of honour and truth!"

He would be considerably surprised could he see her now, alone in her room, with some half-dozen letters spread out before her, each of which tells of love which it is shame to speak of. Her eyes are bright with triumph.

"He loves me," she whispers to herself, and smiles. "He loves me! Oh! to think I might have been his wife!" and now her face darkens.

Does she love him? No, no; she is only caught by the glitter of his gold, by his rank and position. He is a fresh captive, and for the time delightful.

"He will be here to-morrow," she thinks, "and I must look my best." She takes out her necklace of pearls and clasps them about her white throat. How cleverly she has deceived Harold concerning them—how little he guesses the donor! She looks at her own reflection with gratified eyes! "I am the loveliest woman for miles round. Who could think twice of Psyche when I am near!"

On the morrow a little twisted note is brought to her by Collin's trusty messenger.

"This will tell you I have returned; how could I stay away longer! Meet me this evening in the fir copse—at dusk. My love emboldens me to ask this favour of my queen."

And at the appointed time she goes to meet him, regardless alike of her marriage vows, and the fealty she owes Harold.

CHAPTER V.

If Ray knew how Martha watches her, in these days she would feel considerably alarmed. As it is, she is quite content with herself, her conscience not being of the disturbing kind.

She meets Collin daily, and always in secret; but her heart never reproaches her with her conduct towards husband and lover. She has no pity upon this poor boy, who is so infatuated with her beauty as to forget his honour and her reputation; who loves her with the blind, evanescent passion of his twenty years.

She is older than he, and consequently has a wonderful influence over him; and at times,

when his conscience reproves him for the part he is playing, she laughs at him, coaxes him, until he almost believes she is right in her assertions.

Once he tells her he has been to the Rectory; she flushes scarlet with anger.

"It seems to me you spend a considerable part of your time there," she says, tartly.

"Oh, we are such old friends; do you know, Ray, I once believed myself in love with Psyche! But she treated me with kindly disdain, told me I did not know my own mind—as if he did now, poor boy!—and laughed me out of my folly. But we are very good friends."

"She is a very artful girl, and doubtless thought her coolness would make you more eager to pursue her. How disappointed she must have been when you obeyed her and bowed yourself out!"

Collin looks offended.

"I think you ought not to speak like that of Psyche Lucerne. She is one of the dearest and best of girls. And how very lovely Grace has grown!"

Afraid that she has gone too far, she hides her face upon his breast, and begs him to forgive her jealousy, urging that her peculiar position makes her always afraid lest she shall lose his love. And the poor infatuated boy believes her.

After the first step it is so easy to descend, and so Collin finds it. When away from his duty he is fain to break away from the bonds which hold him, but in her presence he is weak as a child, and her beauty holds him captive.

Sometimes he meets Harold, and looking on his worn face and haggard eyes is smitten with sudden remorse, and tells himself he will go away once more, but always Ray holds him to his word, which was "I will never forsake you!"

July passes, and it is now the close of August; a still, divine evening, and Ray has stolen to meet her lover in the shrubbery adjoining the garden.

"At it again, are you?" says Martha, to herself. "How pleased you'd be if you guessed I knewed all. So you think to bring shame on the master, to break his heart? That shan't happen so long as I live," and wrapping a shawl about her head, the faithful servant steals out, keeping at a discreet distance from Ray.

A man's figure is waiting in the shrubbery, and Ray goes hurriedly forward. So does Martha only she hides herself behind trees and shrubs, and listens with all the ears Providence has given her. What she hears blanches her cheeks, and calls a groan from her.

"What noise is that, Collin?" the guilty wife asks, fearfully.

"The wind among the trees, sweetheart!" he answers, lightly, and kisses the scarlet mouth.

Martha rises, and steals back to the house.

"The wind, was it, my gay gallant? Well, wait till to-morrow, and you'll see what sort o' wind it was!"

All night she lies tossing and fro on her bed, wondering how she can foil the lovers and save her master's honour, and at last she determines to go to Psyche.

"She'll know what to do, bless her, an' we'll save the master yet from disgrace." After luncheon has ended she begs permission to go to the Rectory. "I want to ask Miss Psyche to teach me how to make that new puddin' the master likes."

"Go by all means," says Ray, "and if you like you can stay to tea."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," with a sarcastic smile, "the road is dark at night, and I'm nervous. I durstn't stay late," and she bows herself out of Ray's presence. "You're mighty gracious all 't once, my lady," she says, "wonderful so. It ain't often you throw a kind word at poor Martha. Bless you, you ain't got no motive, have you?" and dressing quickly she goes towards the Rectory, to be received cordially by the girls, with whom she is a favourite.

"Go along with you," she says, playfully, to Grace and Trif. "It ain't you I've come to see. Bless you, you're as vain as peacocks, and thinks nobody wants to see no one but yourself."

"Quite right, Martha," says Grace, laughing, lightly, "how clever you are; and what a dear,

cross, cantankerous old soul you can be! Did you come to see father?"

"Yes," cries Phoebe, all smiles and dimples. "She has come to put the ban on us at last."

"Miss Phoebe! I'm ashamed of you, thinkin' o' such things, and you scarce in long frocks."

"Dear me! What would you say, Martha, if I told you I had a sweetheart?"

"That you was a precocious chick, and wanted a good whipping."

Phoebe looks nettled, but her sisters indulge in a hearty laugh at her expense; in which she finally joins, and then, by way of retaliation, remarks,—

"Is your visit to Johnson? Oh, Martha! and his wife has been dead but six months! And really the match would be a poor one for you! I should have thought an odd-job man a trifle below your dignity."

"Miss Trif, why don't you send that child to bed; she's gettin' unbearable! Now, just to silence your sassy tongue, I tell you I've walked down to speak to Miss Psyche on a matter o' business—very important business."

"Psyche's taste in dress is a well-known fact," begins Grace. "Now, for my own part, I should advise a middle-aged bride to wear a—"

"Mamma, if her tongue is as noisy as yours," interpolates Psyche, with a laugh. "My dear Grace, you are getting dangerous. Come, Martha, I will take you to my own room, where we shall be uninterrupted."

"Would I were the chosen confidante; next best thing to having a sweetheart oneself is to listen to a friend's unbecoming about a favoured swain."

Psyche looks over her shoulder.

"Trif, there is some sal volatile on the side-board. Suppose you give Grace a dose; she seems ill," and, laughing, she leads Martha away. Seating her in the easiest chair, she says, "Now, Martha, what is it? Judging from your face I should say it is something of importance."

So Martha tells her tale, Psyche listening with bated breath and whitening face; and when the old lady was ended, she says, in a tone of keenest pain,—

"What would you have me do! Oh, Martha, I am afraid I am helpless!"

"Indeed you're nothin' o' the kind! You're always ready with advice, and you ain't goin' to fall me and the doctor now, to be sure!"

"No, no! but I am bewildered, I did not dream of this—I could not believe such a terrible thing of my cousin! Oh, Martha! if indeed we save her, you only are to be thanked—it will be all your work!"

"But! but! we can talk o' that later on. Now, she's laid her plans afloat. This evening the master goes to Mrs. Faversham's, and won't be back till nine on eleven. Well, she means to meet this boy at ten—she's always late and he's always early, and it's pretty certain he'll be there at half-past nine. Well, do you meet him instead o' her, and talk to him kindly; tell him how you and me knows the wicked thing he means to do, and want to save him; and if he won't hear kindness—well, then tell him you'll send for the master; and that—that woman up you is a close prisoner—say, and I'll take care she is. Twixt us we'll save him if we can, and never let out agin Mrs. K. 'cause that 'ud jest about break master's heart! You'll do your share, Miss Psyche, darlin', won't you?"

"Yes; but I do not fancy my pleading will be much good."

"Only throw all your soul into it and you can't fail—it's for master's sake!"

"Very well; I will be in the shrubbery at half-past nine; keep Mrs. Kildare as long as possible in the house; it is a difficult thing you have given me to do."

"So! but never fear but what we'll pull through; if she will go, she shall either take me with her, or kill me first! Now good-bye, Miss Psyche, dear! Why, oh! why didn't she choose you?"

She kisses the girl and goes out, meeting Grace on the stairs.

"We've chosen the colour, Miss Grace; it's to be pea-green with purple spots, a nice suitable

thing for my complexion, and the Lord Bishop's promised to give me away."

"Martha, you're an old donkey! At your time of life you ought to be ashamed of such flippancy!" and, laughing, the girl runs up to Psyche's room, to find all questions as to Martha's errand fruitless.

As it grows dusk Psyche hurries out, and crossing the lawn unseen goes towards Milton Cottage. She is not very brave, and her heart beats fast as the twilight deepens and the shadows grow more intense. In the shrubbery it is quite dark, and the silence is ghostly. When at length a quick step sounds along the road, she could shriek for very fear. Nearer and nearer it comes, crushing the dry twigs and rustling the long ripe grass. Now a man's figure is dimly visible, and she knows Colin is before her. She does not move—she is so faint from conflicting emotions, and he, seeing her, at first believes it is Ray—but a nearer glimpse shows him it is too slight a figure for his lady-love. Fearing he scarcely knows what he says quickly,—

"Who are you! and what are you doing here?"

The girl advances, and the strange, grey light glinting through the trees shows the pallid face and lovely eyes of Psyche Lucerne.

"Miss Lucerne, what does this mean?" he questions agitatedly, and forgetting all save her longing to spare Harold grief and shame, she clasps her little hands about his arm.

"It means, Mr. Renfrew, that I know why you are here to-night, and have come to save you from a deadly sin!"

He is as white as she now, and she feels that he trembles.

"Once," says the plaintive tender voice, "once we were friends, Colin, and there was nothing you dreaded so much as to hurt me! Often in those early days your escapades grieved me—but, at least, you wronged no man then. This thing you planned to do would go far to break my heart!"

"I don't ask how you came by your knowledge," he says, half sullenly, "but I should like to know if she sent you?"

"No; she does not guess I am in the secret."

"Then I shall stay until she comes; she shall decide for us both."

"You put your life into her hands! Ah! believe me if you do you will rue it all your days. She is neither true nor kind, and more than all the world beside she loves herself. Stay, you must not interrupt me yet—she has wearied of her husband, as she would weary of you. Oh! you poor silly boy, it is not you, but your wealth she loves!"

Angry words tremble on his lips, but he controls himself when he looks into the pure, sweet face of the pleading girl, and says only,—

"He does not understand her; he has failed to make her happy. I alone can do that, and she wears out her heart in grief for me!"

"Colin! Colin! how blind you are! Oh! I pray you not to spoil your life, sell your name, and make all your years bitter by yielding to this wicked passion. Oh! what shall I say to move you? Think of your mother, who loved you so entirely, of the father who was so proud of you!"

"I can't go back, on my word," he says, sullenly. "We love each other."

"If you did you would not seek to degrade each other. She would be sacred to you, and you would be set far apart from her by her marriage vows—which she took so hastily."

"That is it!" he cries, with boyish haste. "She did not know the nature of her vows; she did not read her heart aright."

"She was of age, and she acted in direct opposition to my father's wish. Colin, be a man; give up this idle, vicious passion you dignify with the name of love. Oh, friend—friend, be merciful to yourself and to her!"

"You are pleading in vain. All our preparations are made."

Psyche draws back from him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Renfrew, I believed I was speaking to a gentleman."

"Psyche, don't be so hard—I love her, she is

my life. How, then, shall I give her up when I know what is for my happiness is for hers also?"

"You reason well," bitterly. "With you it is self—self, nothing but self. Do you covet this house?—you must have it. Do you desire this pleasant globe land?—you must have it. Even should you covet your neighbour's wife you shall not be denied. It is the story of David and Uriah over again. And when you have won your Bathsheba what will you do?"

"I will take her away, and as soon as she is free I will make her my wife."

"Yes; and you will honour and esteem her above all women," dryly. "If you have children you will boast of your early exploits; you will not hesitate to bring the blush of shame to their innocent brows. For shame, Colin Renfrew! You will tell them their mother had a true and tender husband, but the woe of him; she ruined his life, shattered his hopes, repaid his love and his care with basest ingratitude; sank to the lowest level; became a creature more vile than the vilest murderer."

"Be silent!" he says, hoarsely. "You don't know how you try me. No man dares speak such words of her in my presence!"

"Are you sure! To do such a thing as you purpose a man must be base indeed, and the guilty are not usually brave. Colin, you will not listen to words of kindness; well, then, you force me to speak harshly. If you persist in your wickedness, Dr. Kildare will, in all probability, ask and obtain a divorce. Say he does so, you marry the woman you fancy you love, and for awhile you live abroad. But soon you begin to yearn for home, and you turn your faces towards England. You reach your native place and look eagerly for a kindly smile, a welcoming hand."

"In vain; you are an outcast for your wife's sake. Your house never re-echoes the merry voices of old friends, no kindly invitations to this or that pleasure reach you—socially you are dead. And day by day as you see your wife's beauty waning, listen to her complaints, you will grow to hate her more and more, until, perhaps, you will be tempted to lift your hand against her."

She ceases as if expecting him to speak, but he makes no reply, nor will he allow her to see his face, and she goes on,—

"This is what must come to you. Listen again. You found this woman—if frail—pure, an honoured member of society, her name unsullied, her life unspotted. Oh! if you love her leave her now, before you have ruined her! Think of her husband; he is an honourable man, her shame would be worse than death to him! Think of his desolate home, his lonely, loveless wife! Colin! Colin! for Heaven's sake let me prevail with you," and suddenly she breaks into wildest weeping.

Her tears affect him more than any words could do. She could not have used a better argument.

"Hush! hush!" he says, entreatingly. "It shall be as you wish, but I must leave here to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE Psyche is battling with Colin, Martha wages war with her mistress. Entering her room, unannounced, unsummoned, she finds Ray packing a few necessary articles in a travelling bag.

"Dear me!" she says, professing not to notice the other's guilty start, "are you goin' away ma'am, and can I help you at all?"

"No, thank you, Martha," responds Ray, sweetly, "I have done all that is needful. I regret to say I must leave home for a few days; the illness of a dear friend is my only excuse."

"And a sufficient one, ma'am; but, bless me, how remiss I must ha' been not to ha' seen the messenger; and what'll the doctor say when he returns and finds you gone?"

"He will say I could do no other; he is not unreasonable."

"That's true, but I don't reckon he'd like you to go without a word o' warning, an' so late at

night too! 'Deed, an' I think I'd better go with you to the station."

"It is not necessary, Martha; I am not at all nervous; but it is kind to suggest such a thing. Still" (smiling) "if I am selfish, I do not forget how cruelly your rheumatism plagues you."

"You're wonderful kind, ma'am," sweetly, "but I ain't goin' to be so forgetful of my duty as to let you go unprotected. Such a lovely young critter as you ought never be without a guardian."

Ray laughs, although she begins to find Martha's anxiety a little overwhelming, and she says, very gently indeed, for her,—

"I am mistress, Martha, and this time I intend to please myself."

"Very well, ma'am, o' course you're in the right."

But as soon as Ray leaves the house she follows, and hearing her footsteps the guilty woman turns angrily.

"What do you want! Did I not tell you to stay at home!"

"Yes, ma'am, you did; an' it's awful rude o' me to disobey you."

"Then why do you do so?" in a still more angry tone.

"Because I ain't goin' to see you drift into shame, and not stretch out a hand to help you. I've served the doctor ever since he was a boy, and I won't stand by and see him ruined."

"What do you mean, you insolent old woman!"

"Jest this, ma'am. You're a-goin' to meet your sweetheart to-night, and you think to go away with him; but you'll find yourself a bit out o' your reckoning. Where you go I shall go, and I'll raise such a hubbub at the station that you won't ever dare to show your face here agin. Oh! you wicked, shameless woman! Do you think you've ever had a secret from me since you came to this house? Do you think I didn't know you for what you are the first time I see you?"

"I don't understand you," Ray says, in a faltering voice. "You speak in riddles."

"Oh! then I'll make haste to speak plain. You were goin' to-night to meet the young squire, Mr. Colin Renfrew, and you meant to leave your home with him. Ain't I watched you night after night, and listened when you thought no one was near? Ay, an' many a mornin' too, when the doctor was well away, and you thought no one noticed you slippin' out o' the garden. Now you'll jest come back with me, or I'll know the reason why. Mr. Renfrew's got tired o' waitin', and is gone long ago. Oh! Miss Psyche, are you there? She's gone and fainted clean away."

Psyche comes running at the call, and together they convey Ray to the house, but when she recovers consciousness Psyche is not near.

She starts up, with wild eyes and dishevelled hair.

"I must go, I must go!" she cries, but Martha presses her gently back upon the sofa.

"It ain't no good goin' now, ma'am. Mr. Renfrew got tired o' waitin' a long time ago, and he went off by himself; and what's more, he's come to his senses at last, and don't mean to see you no more."

Ray stares at her as if she believes her demented, and Martha goes on.

"It ain't from no wish to screen you from shame, but only to spare the master, that I promise to tell him nothin' o' to-night's doin's, and Miss Psyche will be quiet too."

"Does she know?"

"Lor! yes; 'twas she showed that poor boy the way he was goin', and saved you and him from sin. You're a bad woman, and a ungrateful one, but for master's sake I'm goin' to stand by you; only you must not carry things quite so high as you've been doin'."

Angry, humiliated, Ray sits sullen, and Martha goes on,—

"You don't think I've been blind either to the way you've treated Miss Psyche! Well, in future, you've got to be civil to her, an' it'll be a bad day for you on which you say anythin' agin her. For the rest, ma'am, you're my mistress, and in all things right I'm goin' to obey you. Now I think you'd better take off your hat; the

doctor 'll be in soon, and wonder to see you dressed for walkin'."

She offers her arm to the beautiful, impenitent woman, and leads her to her room. There Ray pauses on the threshold.

"I am in your power now," she says, in a suppressed tone, "but I shall not always be, and then you will be sorry for your impertinence. I hope both you and that upstart, Psyche Lucerne, may suffer tenfold the humiliation and disappointment I now bear!"

"Thank you, kindly, ma'am; but curses mostly come home to roost, so I wouldn't be too free of 'em if I was you," and with a respectful curtsy Martha turns away.

Alone in her room, Ray flings herself on her bed, and breaks into a paroxysm of weeping. She does not love Colin Renfrew, but he has made an agreeable diversion in her life; and he can give her those things she prizes more than honour, or truth, or faith; and now she must go back to the old hideous routine, the old dull existence.

No, no! she cannot; and suddenly rising she goes to her dressing-table and writes him a passionate entreaty to meet her at the usual place the following night; then, ringing her bell, she gives it into the housemaid's charge, who in turn delivers it to Martha.

"Lor, it ain't right you should walk down to the village at this time o' night," says Martha. "I'll take it for you; how thoughtless minds is!"

"But," urges the girl, "I would like to go, and I'm sure to meet Will half-way."

"Bless me, it's after the boys you are! Well, I've been young myself, so be off with you, and have a good time. I'll see to the letter; only if she asks you if you posted it you say yes, unless you want to raise Cain!"

Glad enough to get her freedom at any price the girl runs out, and Martha slowly spells out the address,—

"COLIN RENFREW, ESQ.,

"The Hall."

"Oh! to be sure, ma'am; I'll see he gets it!" she says with considerable acidity, "and much good may the readin' of it do him," and she proceeds to reduce it to ashes, smiling grimly all the while.

When Ray learns Colin has really gone without seeing her she is confounded. She has relied so implicitly on her charms to keep him always her object alive, that at first she cannot realise the fact that he has broken loose from his bonds. But when she masters this, she makes the house a very purgatory for Harold, and spends all her hours either in lamenting her lot, or reproaching her husband with the extreme dullness of it, and the narrowness of their means.

Matters grow from bad to worse at Milton Cottage, and the doctor is at his wife's ends. Too proud to borrow from a friend, and, perhaps fearful that he may never be able to pay any loan so obtained, he gives a bill of sale on his furniture, and this somehow becomes known.

His familiar friends eye him askance, but the wise ones whisper it is all Mrs. Kildare's doing, that she is an extravagant, worthless woman, and her husband deserves all sympathy. The Rector and his daughters hear the news with unfeigned sorrow.

"Poor lad! poor lad! and all seemed so fair with him," says Mr. Lucerne. "I must go down and see him."

Then Grace, the sharpest tongued of them all, says,—

"Father, haven't you a few pounds to spare. Couldn't you lend him some money?"

Psyche covertly possesses herself of the girl's hand.

"Oh! my dear;" she whispers, and can say no more. Then little Phoebe exclaims,—

"Grace, what is the matter? You are crying!"

"No, I am not, stupid; there's a fly in my eye. Can you see it, Psyche?"

"She might with a microscope," laughs Trif, "but I wouldn't advise her to do so. Seriously,

father, couldn't we do with as maller allowance this quarter. Harold Kildare is welcome to half of mine if it will help him."

"And mine, and mine," cry Grace and Phoebe.

Psyche says nothing then, but later she steals out to the Rector.

"Father, give him the whole of my allowance. I have everything I want."

And not until long, long after does Harold know whence this blessed and unexpected help comes to him.

People notice a great change in the once genial doctor. He has grown haggard and reserved; he looks like a man bowed down by some great and secret trouble. The women, of course, are unanimous in blaming Ray for this alteration in him—the men equally, of course, combine to condemn Harold.

He has taken the management of all affairs in his own hands, and is doing his utmost to settle every claim against him. He enforces rigid economy, dismisses the housemaid, and cuts down Ray's allowance, and when she remonstrates with tears and bitter words, says only, "No man shall say he was robbed by me."

He sells his horse and gig, and walks in lieu of riding. Often and often he returns home too tired to eat or sleep, but there is no loving welcome waiting him, no word of encouragement. He never complains; it is his own fault that he is unhappy, and he is too honest to shift the blame upon other shoulders.

Months pass, and Ray has fretted herself into a shadow of the girl Dr. Kildare fancied he loved. The dull routine of her life is hateful to her, and she is sick and sore at Colin's silence, for not a word has ever reached her from him—he has kept his promise well to Psyche.

And when spring comes she has succeeded in making herself positively ill, so that Harold proposes she should have change of air and scene. She seizes at this offer with avidity, and selects Bournemouth as her staying-place.

"I shall have plenty of life there," she says, gleefully. "Oh, how I shall enjoy myself!" and she sets to work to renovate her old dresses and hats, and order new ones. She is so bright, so gay, that Harold regards her with dim, pained eyes, and Martha goes about muttering in her displeasure.

So Ray goes to Bournemouth with some friends, and as they are gay people she has a great deal of society, and is in her element. Her youth and bloom return to her, and folks begin to know the beautiful face and graceful figure of Harold's wife and to look for her in all the most public places. She writes careless little notes to Harold, giving him but the faintest idea of the life she is leading, and asking always for more money.

At the end of a month he writes her to return, but she pleads for "just one more week," and he grants it. Perhaps he is not altogether sorry to have seven more days' peace.

Delighted beyond measure to have her request granted, Ray indulges in every pleasure, determined to atone for past dullness. On the morning of the third day the head of the family with whom she is staying (a Mr. Misen) proposes they shall take a boat and row out some distance, returning in time for luncheon.

"That will be glorious!" cries Ray, clapping her hands. "I dearly love the sea!"

"Well, as all seem agreed, I'll run down and charter a boat. Take plenty of wraps, Mrs. Kildare; you will find it somewhat cool."

An hour later six people walk down to the beach, Ray walking first with Charlie Misen, a youth of twenty, with whom she is carrying on a mild flirtation. The sea is spread before them, glittering like a silver sheet under the noonday sun, the sky is a deep, intense blue, the air just cool enough to be pleasant.

"We shall have great fun," says Ray, as she takes her seat beside Charlie. "Oh, how I shall hate going home! You cannot tell how dull it is there; you do not know how I shall miss you all!" with a languishing glance at the blushing, delighted youth.

"Oh! I say, Mrs. Kildare, you're not going at the end of the week; that is all nonsense.

You must ask the doctor to spare you a little longer."

"It is useless," sighing. "You see we are not rich people, and therefore cannot afford indefinite holidays. But I shall be very miserable when the time comes to say good-bye."

Here the conversation becomes general, and laughter and merriment hold sway. They go further than they at first intended, and it is somewhat past two when they turn the boat homewards.

"I have never enjoyed a morning so well as this," says Ray, sentimentally, as they near the shore. "I shall remember it all my life!"

And as she speaks someone moves suddenly. The next moment the air is cleft with wild shrieks, and the whole party is plunged into the sea. Charlie is nearest to Ray, and he catches at her beautiful hair which has become loosened, but he cannot grasp it—he cannot reach her! When he comes to himself, half-an-hour afterwards, he asks, "Are they all safe?" and his mother comes weeping to his side.

"All but Ray! Oh, Charlie! Charlie! how shall we send the news to Dr. Kidgare! Her body has not yet been found! Oh, my dear boy! my dear boy! I feel almost as though her death lay at our door! She was with us, we should have been more careful for her safety! Charlie! Charlie! don't stop like that. You will be positively ill—lie still and try to sleep."

Yes, it is ended now—the weak, wasted, selfish life! And now she is gone Harold reproaches himself that he has not been more forbearing to her. He forgets her faults, and remembers only her beauty and the love she once had given him.

He hastens to Bournemouth, and that same evening her beautiful body comes floating towards the shore. Her face is unscarred, untouched by anguish; and as she lies with all her bright hair blown about her face and breast, she reminds the lookers-on of that wonderful picture, "The Christian Martyr." There is no shadow of sin, no hint of shame, on the exquisite features, and in a sudden burst of pain and remorse Harold kneels by her, sobbing, "Oh, wife! wife! if I could but have known the end, how differently I would have acted!"

He has her carried home, and buried in the quiet little churchyard; and then he goes about his duties with such an apathetic air, such utter weariness, that Martha sheds many bitter tears over him.

(Continued on page 352)

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

CHAPTER XXII.

An evil spirit seemed to have got into Godfrey Somerville that night—he offended Meta, tried to quarrel with Mr. Mallon, and made outrageous love before them all to Nella. She was thankful to escape from the dinner-table, and take refuge by Lady Harrington's side in the drawing-room, where she sat for some time mute as a mouse, her cheeks flushed, her heart beating fast, feeling as if she would like to go into a corner and cry.

Mr. Mallon, who was standing on the hearth-rug talking to Sir Edward, watched her with true sympathy in his eyes, and determined not to let her be victimised by Somerville again if he could manage to prevent it.

He looked at Vere, but Cyril was fully occupied with turning over Meta's pages at the piano, and could not see the significant glances cast at his back.

Godfrey came out of the conservatory, with an aggrieved expression on his face.

"Why has that red camellia been taken away! It was a better tree than any of the others."

"You must ask Watkins," said Sir Edward. "I suppose the blossom was falling off. It does

not do to keep them when the bloom is beginning to get poor."

"He had no business to move it without orders—he knows that it is my favourite colour."

"I will ask him to-morrow; perhaps he has another!"

"If he hasn't, he had better get one. There are plenty of the white and the pink, which he knows I don't care for."

"Other people may," said his uncle gently, for he was always over-indulgent to his nephew.

"What do you say, Miss Maynard?"

"I like anything better than red."

"Out of simple perversity!" with a short laugh. "I think I had better say I like white dresses, and then she'll always be obliged to wear colours."

"Has Mr. Somerville's opinion so much weight with you, Miss Maynard?" asked Mr. Mallon, quietly.

"None at all, Mr. Mallon; I like white in summer, because it is so cool. Red I never wear; I regard it as the Somerville badge."

"I would rather you didn't," said Godfrey, crossly. "I don't want it to become a livery."

"Why don't you dress your servants in red coats?" said Mr. Mallon, quickly.

"Because I don't wish them to be taken for soldiers out on leave, or to see them aping me in cast-off 'pink.'"

"I suppose you selected the flowers for Miss Somerville's bouquet?"

"No; I was rather late."

"She evidently consulted your wishes."

"Yes, she always does in private, as well as public; Miss Maynard, on the other hand, snubs me before people," stopping in order that the contrary inference might be drawn with regard to their private interviews.

"Which is a trifle to the cold shoulder she turns on you when alone," put in Mr. Mallon.

"Of course I have never seen it, but I can quite imagine it."

"Can you!" with a supercilious smile.

"What an imagination you must have, to be sure! Will you come into the conservatory," turning to Nella, "and show me how the plants ought to be arranged! Watkins has done them vilely."

"You had better ask Meta; that is her business, not mine."

"I suppose I may have them put as I like," the colour rushing into his face at anyone daring to impugn his full prerogative at Somerville.

"At all events, you could suggest!"

"If I did I should see that it was carried out. Come and suggest for me!"

"No, you are evidently wedded to your own opinions."

"Give me a chance of hearing yours."

"I see no use in it; they would be sure to clash."

"Never mind, I want a talk!"

"And I want to be silent."

"For the first time in your life. If Vere had asked you—lowering his voice—"you would have flown."

"And if I did!" throwing back her head defiantly.

"What is he to you! Judging from appearances—nothing!"

"He is a cousin, and a dear old friend," speaking almost in a whisper, "whilst you are a mere acquaintance, whom I never dislike so much as when you don't hate me."

His eyes flashed angrily.

"Don't be afraid; the hatred isn't gone yet. I meant to be friends because you had done me a good turn, but now," clenching his teeth vindictively, "I'll ruin your life if I can."

Then he walked away from her, and up to the piano, where Meta received him coldly. But he was so unusually devoted that he soon won her over, and her spirits which had been down almost to "rain" went up with a bound to "set fair."

Cyril Vere sauntered up to the group by the fire with the intention of making himself agreeable to his hostess, but she was nodding over her knitting with such a complacent smile on her

face that it seemed a pity to disturb her; and Sir Edward, tired with his day's sport, was following her example in the depths of his favourite arm-chair. He was just going to take up the *Globe*, and succumb on to the sofa, when Mr. Mallon proposed an adjournment to the conservatory—saying that flowers were a delight to him, and he had not had a chance of seeing any for a long while.

Nella rose at once, and Vere followed, unable to let her out of his sight, and yet too angry to wish to make use of his opportunities. Somerville's conduct at dinner had convinced him that his engagement to his cousin was a myth, and he considered that it was more than probable that Nella was already bound to him by a promise. Under these circumstances she had no necessity to manoeuvre for a *fille d'élite* as if she wanted an explanation; she would be sure to manufacture an occasion, and prolonged talk on a painful subject would be disagreeable to both.

The conservatory was a mass of bloom, and they passed from flower to flower, apparently lost in admiration, to judge by the little conversation they indulged in. Mr. Mallon made a remark every now and then, but Nella, oppressed by Cyril, grave, silent, and preoccupied, scarcely gave more than monosyllabic replies.

Vere pulled down a blossom of the *Taxonia*, and inspected the tassell-like centre of the crimson star.

"Don't give it to Miss Maynard," said Mr. Mallon, with a smile. "She has already announced that she regards red as the Somerville badge, and hates it accordingly."

"Are you going to hunt to-morrow?" asked Nella.

"No, it is an off-day, so I am thinking of showing Mallon the beauties of the neighbourhood."

"Deepden is the prettiest place, I believe!"

"Yes! Rather too shut in for my taste."

"And Miss Arkwright is the belle of Blankshire," praising her rival, with a sigh.

"I suppose she is. What do you think, Mallon?"

But Mr. Mallon, having good-naturedly contrived to get the two cousins together, had no sooner done so than he slipped away.

A sudden constraint fell on them both.

"Shall we go back into the drawing-room!" said Nella, timidly.

Cyril chewed the end of a stalk irresolutely, and then turned round and faced her.

"Tell me frankly where you went on the day that Limerick ran away!"

Watching her intently, he saw the colour rush into her cheeks, and her hands tremble.

A moment of hesitation, and then she said, looking up into his face, with a sort of appeal in her eyes,—

"Only where the horse chose to take me."

Anything like quibbling was abhorrent to his nature, and he turned away with a gesture of contempt.

"That is no answer. Why can't you give a straight answer to a plain question?"

"It is as plain as I can make it"—her breast heaving—"Limerick was mad, and it was as much as I could do to keep on his back—the roads were strange to me. I did not know where we went, or how far!"

"Very clever of the horse to find out exactly where you wanted to go!"—sarcastically.

"I only wanted to go home," still very meekly, though her patience was severely tried.

"You took a long time to get there."

"Was it my fault?" opening her large dark eyes, and looking at his stern face in surprise.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I was brought up in an old-fashioned school, with a prejudice in favour of truth, honesty and maiden-modesty."

"Cyril!"—turning white to the very lips.

"You may look surprised, but there is no one so astonished as I. When you were at Eton and Prior if you had one fault it was excessive candour. If you hated anyone you said so, without too much regard for his feelings; if you did anything wrong, or even doubtful, you couldn't rest till you had told it."

"I know it—it is my way, and I hope I shall always be the same!"

"No fear. You have changed so much already that you seem a different girl. Six months ago, if I had asked you a simple question, you would have died rather than answer with a sneaking equivocation!"

"Cyril, I won't hear it!" her eyes flashing, her breath coming short. "You must be under a delusion, or you wouldn't talk so. Only tell me what I have done!"

"I wanted you to tell me, to see if there were one spark of truth left. I gave you the chance, but you wouldn't use it; and now"—stooping down and looking her straight in the face—"I will tell you that it is no use trying to humbug me, for I saw you!"

"Thank Heavens!" she exclaimed, excitedly, clasping her hands.

He stepped back in surprise.

"Yes, I am so thankful. I was under a promise; but if you saw me it is useless to keep it. Limerick ran straight in—the gates were open—and Mr. Somerville stopped him. I only waited till he brought a dog-cart to fetch me away."

"Is this true?"

"Of course it is!" throwing back her head in passionate pride.

"Then there was no appointment?"

"Nothing of the kind!"

He drew a deep breath.

"Are not you ashamed of yourself for having thought such a thing?"

"But appearances were so much against you."

"And if all the appearances in the world were against you, do you think it would make any difference to me?"

"Not much!" with a small smile. "But then you never thought well of me to begin with."

A look of great tenderness passed over her face, but she turned it away from him towards the flowers.

"Not when I see you planning and plotting under my nose!"

"For Heaven's sake, take care!" looking over his shoulder in alarm.

"There are none but the camellias to hear. Do you think it was pleasant for me to be left in the dark, when Miss Arkwright was shaking all over, my own cousin looking on thorns, and Mr. Mallon, an utter stranger, evidently taken into confidence?"

"Miss Arkwright had just had a fall, and was naturally upset!" blushing as guiltily as if he had committed a crime.

"Who is quibbling now?"

"Not I!" trying to put his arm round her waist. "Never mind Miss Arkwright. Have you forgiven me?"

"But I do mind Miss Arkwright"—slipping away from him—"and if she is to be my future cousin—"

"No one will be that," interrupting her hastily. "Nell, let me have a rose," stretching out his hand towards the one which was nestling close to the creamy whiteness of her neck.

She bent slightly forward, looking at him with her most winning smile. As he took it with reverent fingers that scarcely dared to touch, their eyes met. A great wave of emotion passed over his face, his lips trembled, as he stepped back with a sigh.

Nella went to bed that night with joy in her heart. The clouds which had so long parted her from her cousin seemed to have disappeared, and the earth was scarcely wide enough to contain her happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Lie down with joy, and you'll wake on the morrow,
To find that your joy has changed into sorrow."

It was so with Eleanor Maynard. She woke with a vague presentiment of evil, which was realised before she evening. And yet the day began well, and with unusual cheerfulness. Godfrey Somerville did not appear till the late breakfast was almost ended, so Cyril took his place beside her, and attended to all her wants as in the old days at Elstone.

Her spirits revived with the knowledge that their painful estrangement was at an end, and she astonished Meta by her merriment. Mr. Mallon, sunk in a brown study, only exerted himself as much as was necessary for the sake of politeness; the host and hostess were both engrossed by their correspondence, and Meta could think of little else than Godfrey's empty chair.

"What are you going to do this morning?" inquired Nella, as she buttered a piece of toast.

"We had thought of a ride!" said Cyril, carelessly.

"Oh yes, of course, I remember. Would you like to take Miss Arkwright my bottle of salts?"

Mr. Mallon looked up quickly.

"Oh, Mr. Mallon, I did not mean you. Cyril will drag you there, and I pity you, for it isn't pleasant to pick gooseberries in December."

"I don't know where you would find them."

"Because you never looked for them. The unlucky third person will. And I don't envy him."

"Why don't you go too?" said Meta, with a smile, thinking a long morning alone with Godfrey would not be disagreeable.

"Because I'm not asked—and I wouldn't go if I were," she added, hurriedly, lest Cyril should think she wanted to come.

"Of course not. After yesterday you will find every ride slow without a fox in front. By the bye, you had better give me that brush and I'll see that it's properly mounted."

"Thanks, if it won't trouble you. I shall keep that brush for ever in remembrance of the most exciting day of my life. Oh, Meta, I wish you had been there!"

"At the bottom of a ditch, like Miss Arkwright!"

"No; I was not thinking of the run, but afterwards"—a kick under the table—"the ride home was so delightful."

"Didn't it snow a little, and weren't you very tired?"

"The weather was disgusting, and I felt as if I should drop off my saddle."

"Then what was so delightful?"

"The—the company, I suppose."

"Ah! you were glad to have a long talk with your cousin?"

"I rode behind nearly all the way with Mallon," said Cyril, quietly; "but of course I was a secondary condition with that brush in her saddle-strap."

"I should think you were. I've had a cousin all my life, but a fox's brush never before."

"I believe it was a vixen's," with a mischievous smile, "so it came to you through natural affinity."

"Thank you, she was no relation!"

"Not in name or nature?"

"Not in name, for I am Maynard, not Reynard—not in nature, for when people run after me I never run away."

"There's a confession!" cried Godfrey Somerville, who had entered unperceived, throwing his whip down on the sideboard. "A confession and a challenge as well!"

"When are we to begin?" and Cyril's eyes twinkled mischievously. "All at once or separately?"

"One by one," said Somerville, pulling off his riding-gloves. "I shall take my turn whilst you two fellows are out."

"Are you going to stay at home?" and Sir Edward looked up in surprise from his newspaper.

"I've had a good long ride already. I got up before any of the household were stirring," taking his place by Meta's side. She welcomed him with a warm smile, and before he had time to ask for it, poured out his coffee.

Cyril and Mr. Mallon exchanged glances. "What had the scoundrel been up to?" passing through their minds.

"What possessed you to go out in the dark?" inquired Nella, curiously getting the better of every other feeling.

"I had a restless night, and couldn't sleep."

"Where did you go?"

"Wouldn't you like to know? I thought of rapping at your door, and asking if you would like to come too."

"I should never have forgiven you for disturbing my dreams."

"Yes, you would!—the reality would have more than repaid you."

"Meta might have liked it, but not I."

"Not you?" with a smile of superior knowledge, as he cracked the shell of an egg.

"No! nor any other sane person," broke in Cyril. "Fancy facing a raw December morning before sunrise, unless for a matter of life or death."

"I rather liked it."

"Perhaps you had an object?" looking at him sharply.

"I had—to tire myself out."

"My dear boy," said Lady Somerville, affectionately, as she looked at his worn face. "I wish you wouldn't do such mad things; you'll ruin your health."

"That was done long ago," tossing off his coffee, as if he were dying of thirst. "What are you staring at?"—to Nella.

"You have a green mark on your coat-sleeve," she said hastily, the colour rushing into her cheeks as she remembered the mark that she had brought home on her own sleeve from the damp, green moss in the arbour at Nun's Tower. Had he been there that morning! A vague fear stole over her mind.

"And did you never see a green mark before? Just go into the shrubbery on a damp morning like this, and knock up against one of the trees like I did. Meta, will you have a game of billiards with me soon after twelve?"

"You know I can't play," raising her eyebrows disconsolately. "I only wish I could!"

"I quite forgot. Miss Maynard, you'll take compassion on me, I know!" looking across the table with a significant glance, which exasperated Cyril.

"So sorry, but I have letters to write. Have you any message for your mother?" turning to Vera.

"Only my love, and I shall be home soon after Christmas."

"Where are you going to spend it?" with wide-open eyes.

"At Deepden Chase. It was an old promise," he added quickly, as he saw her face cloud, "Jack made such a point of it."

"And your father and mother didn't care?"

"I won't say that," with a smile; "but they were very willing to give me up. You must remember that they always got on very well without me at Elstone, as you took the trouble to teach me."

"Only to prevent you from getting conceited. I was rather glad than not when you came"—remembering how her heart used to dance for joy at the first whisper that he was coming home.

"You didn't often tell me so."

"Must you go out riding?" in a low voice.

"I am afraid I must; I promised Mallon."

"Mallon or Jack," she pouted, "anyone but me!"

"Because you never ask me to do a single thing to please you."

"You've been as cross as a bear."

"But not now—I feel in charity with all the world," smiling down into her face in a manner that nearly sent Godfrey mad.

"How long will it last?"

"Till you do something outrageous."

"I hope it won't be just yet," thinking how delightful it was to be again at peace with him.

"So do I." A large letter in a blue envelope was lying on the table beside him. He took it up, and put it into his pocket, as if it had some connection with his words.

Sir Edward, having told his guests to give their own orders in the stables, left the room, saying that he was obliged to go off to Copplesstone.

Nella walked to the window and looked out, wondering if Miss Arkwright had anything to do with Cyril's urgent wish for a ride. The snow was beginning to fall, but it seemed as if nothing would deter him.

Last night, when he took the rose from her dress, it looked as if she were the only woman in the world for him; this morning already she

began to have doubts. She remembered the scene in the grounds of the ruined Castle, when he had raised Dulcie Arkwright's hand to his lips—she remembered how he gave up a run for her sake, only yesterday; and to-day she was quite certain that it was Dulcie, and not Mr. Mallon, who was drawing him away from her side, when she had actually begged him to stay.

Well, she must be content! In the old days she had never asked for more; and now it had come back to her in all its freshness, surely she might be satisfied!

"Nella, where are you?" Just as she was thinking of him, he put his head in at the door, his face as bright and happy-looking as it had always been, till she made it her business to cloud it.

It was only a button he wanted to be sewn on his glove; but as she took him into the boudoir, where she had left her work-basket, her heart was thrilling with delight at performing the small office for him.

He watched her pretty little fingers with a well-pleased smile, as the needle and thread passed slowly through the dog-skin, and she made a grimace to show how very hard it was.

"Do you know I am quite a moneyed person!" said Nella, looking up at him suddenly. "Besides my own fifty pounds, Sir Edward insists on giving me just the same as if I were his own daughter—a hundred a-year."

"Good gracious! I must treat you with more respect; I shall call you Miss Maynard for the future."

"If you dare! But don't laugh; I want you to be serious. You know that you've been very good to me all my life—and I've never done anything for you in return. Don't interrupt—and men, unless they are perfect Crocodiles—growing crimson—are always hard up."

"Pretty often, I'll allow," wondering what was coming next.

"I don't bet; I never go to races. I never want to buy a horse, and I never have to play high, because I can't get out of it."

"I never said you did," his wonder increasing. "Fancy little Nell developing into the sort of woman that bets and gambles!"

"Well, but don't you see"—too serious to relax into a smile—"I don't know what to do with all this money, it quite bothers me! Couldn't you take it and make use of it?"

"Make use of it! What do you mean?"

"Don't be angry," laying her hand on his arm. "It seems so silly that I should have it when I don't want it the least bit in the world, and we've always been just like brother and sister. Would you mind taking it? It might pay off a debt or buy a horse, and I should be so very, very glad."

"Nell!"

His lip trembled, and for a minute he seemed scarcely able to speak.

"Don't say 'no.' You can't be so unkind."

"My good little Nell—"

"I'll run and fetch it."

"No, no," catching hold of her dress. "My dear child, what are you thinking of?"

"My own pleasure, which, of course, you grudge me."

"Never, unless it's impossible to help it. You are quite under a mistake; I'm not much bothered just at present, and I had a slice of good luck in the autumn. But if I had been without a penny, do you think anything would have tempted me to prey on your little hoard?"

"Why not? Could anything be so dreadful as taking your watch-chain?"

"That was nothing; I had another."

"Yes, a miserable silver thing, which I can't bear to see you wearing."

"I like it," taking it up, and looking at it.

"Then give it to me, and take the other back."

"Not for the world! I must go, I hear the horses. Good-bye!"

"You've disappointed me, exceedingly," she tears coming into her eyes.

"I couldn't help it. I'm as grateful as I can be; but think, Nell, a man must have sunk so very low before he could borrow from a woman."

"Not from a sister!"

He held out his hand; then, overcome by an irresistible impulse, as he looked down into the wistful face upraised to his, stooped down and kissed her hair.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WELL, have you finished your letters?" Godfrey Somerville's voice roused her from the happiest of day-dreams, and Nella looked up from the writing-table, where she had been sitting for the last half-hour, pen in hand, with a guilty blush.

"No, not quite."

"You haven't begun," looking over her shoulder. "What the deuce have you been doing?"

"I wish you wouldn't swear. You might, at least, give it up when you are talking to a woman."

"I might do many things that I don't," sitting down on the arm of the sofa, in irritating proximity to the back of her chair. "I might have interrupted you when you were having a spoon with Vere, but I thought it would be a long while before you had another chance, so I kindly let you be."

"Extend your kindness further, and let me write my letters in peace."

"That would be too much virtue for one morning; besides, Meta is waiting for me to talk nonsense to her by the yard, so I can't waste a minute."

"I don't see why you should talk nonsense. Meta is too sensible to wish it."

"Not too sensible to want the sort of nonsense I mean; and let me tell you, it's uncommonly hard work to make love to a face all over freckles."

"You ought to be ashamed to say such a thing. You don't deserve to be her husband."

"I'm aware of it; but she couldn't get on without me."

This was so indisputably true that Nella had not the audacity to deny it, so devoted all her attention to her letter.

"Stop that!" he cried, irritably. "I told you I wanted to talk."

"You told me something else last night, and I haven't forgotten it."

"I'm glad of that—you drove me to it, and I couldn't help it. You want me to hate you, and I've made up my mind to show you that I do."

"But you don't!" She knew it was imprudent, but the words slipped out through the spirit of perversity he always roused in her breast.

A change came over his face. He leant forward with glowing eyes.

"No, by Jove! I don't!" he said, slowly.

Then there was a pause, during which her pen went rapidly over the paper, and his eyes rested on the graceful curve of her neck with unwilling admiration.

"Look here!" he said, gravely. "I wouldn't waste a thought on Cyril Vere. I saw enough yesterday to see that he was head over ears in love with Dulcie Arkwright."

"I only saw that something was weighing on your mind, and that you were in a tremendous fidget to be off!"

"Quite natural, too, when a lot of curiosity-mongers were prowling about the place!"

"You were afraid of something being found out. What was it?" fixing her eyes upon him.

"Nothing much; only if people didn't understand it might tell against me."

"If it is another wife, I can't stand by and see Meta marry you!"

Not a muscle of his face quivered.

"Don't disturb yourself! I shan't commit bigamy—the law is too dead against it; and there is not a woman in England for whom I would risk penal servitude! Strange fellow, that Mallon," he added, after a pause, "I can't make him out."

Every now and then, when I catch his eye, or he speaks a little faster than usual, I could fancy I had seen him before! Where did Vere pick him up?"

"I know nothing about him."

"What were they after yesterday—can you tell me that?"

"Miss Arkwright!"

"Miss Arkwright be hanged!" he exclaimed, impatiently.

"Poor thing! I don't see how she has deserved it."

"Perhaps you will think she does when she marries Vere!"

"Not if he asks her."

"And you could give him up without a struggle!" his eyes opening wide with amazement.

"Certainly!" with calm dignity. "I would not stir a finger to keep him!"

"Bravo! I always knew you had a spirit of your own. Ask him to-night if he went to Nun's Tower this morning."

"Is it likely?"

"I don't know!" with a shrug of his shoulders. "They are up to something, but I can't make it out. If you would only ferret out their secrets, there's nothing on earth I wouldn't do for you."

"Find them out, in order to betray them!" with indignant contempt.

"Why not? Join hands with me, and we shall be even—two against two."

"You have Meta and all the Somerville interest to back you!"

"A sleepy set of folks without two ideas in their heads."

"I don't agree with you. I love and honour Sir Edward so much that I only wish he were my father!"

"And then if I married Meta I should be your brother—what a delightful thought!"

"Only my brother-in-law—and that is quite different!"

"I agree with you. All sorts of enchanting possibilities."

"We could hate each other just as well."

"Of course we could; and you would try hard to manage it!"

"Do tell me what is this mystery about Nun's Tower!" her curiosity again getting the better of her feelings.

"In order that you may tell it to Cyril Vere, and he may whisper it to Mallon, till it goes the round of the county."

"I would not tell it to a soul if you wished it kept secret!"

"And supposing there is no secret, what then?"

"Nonsense! You were in a terrible fright yesterday lest you should be found out."

"I was in a fright lest you should make it up with Vere, and I should be left in the cold."

"You never thought of it!" with supreme contempt.

"Didn't I?" a peculiar smile curling his mouth. "I think of you so often that I would give anything to get you out of my head!"

"So likely, when you tell me calmly that you have made up your mind to ruin my life," that vague fear, in bewildering connection with his early ride, darting again through her mind.

"And so I will," he said, sullenly; "if you can't belong to me, no one else shall have you!"

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed, breathlessly, as a presentiment came across her that his words would prove true. "You never wanted me for yourself, so you can't mind."

"Can't I! I didn't mind, I suppose, when you flatly refused to go into the conservatory with me, and directly my back was turned marched off with Vere. Wait till he comes back this evening, and then you'll see."

"But you had Meta, and I am nothing to you."

"Do you call it nothing to be the pest and the torment of my life!" his voice rising in sudden agitation as he clutched the back of her chair, and made a shudder run down her spine.

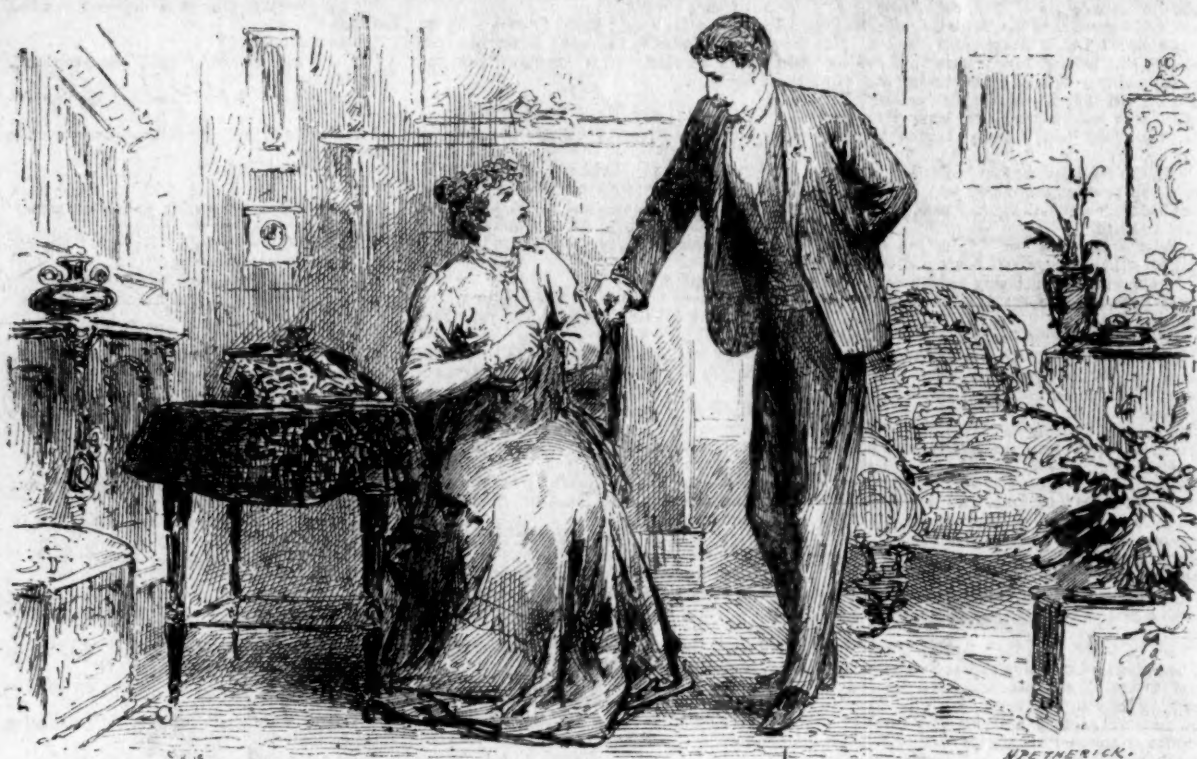
Her only answer was to gather up her writing materials, and make for the door.

"What are you after?"

"You disturb me," she said, quietly, "and I want to finish my letters before luncheon."

"Sit down again, I'm going away."

"Really!"



"DO YOU KNOW I AM QUITE A MONEYED PERSON?" SAID NELLA, LOOKING UP AT CYRIL SUDDENLY.

He nodded, so she resumed her seat. As soon as she had done so he came and leant upon the back of it familiarly:

"Nell, for the last time, are we to be friends or foes?"

"Foes!" without looking round, "and never call me that again!"

"You have made up your mind?"

"I have."

"Then wait till this evening."

"I am not in the least afraid," though her heart was sinking.

"Perhaps not," with a cruel smile; "but I never forgive, though I sometimes forget."

"I don't see how you could possibly injure me if you tried."

"What if I had already begun?"

Then he went out quickly and banged the door.

Nella finished her letters only just in time for luncheon, for Godfrey Somerville had succeeded in disturbing her mind completely. There was such a mystery surrounding him that she placed more credence in his threats than she would have done if he had been like other men; but still she could not see that it was really in his power to harm her.

He was utterly unscrupulous, and would probably stick at nothing in the way of falsehood or deceit, and in that lay the danger, for truthful people are naturally placed at a disadvantage with those who have unlimited lies at their disposal.

Still, so long as Cyril was friends with her she felt that she could defy all the world, and so went in to luncheon in a cheerful frame of mind.

In the afternoon the snow cleared off, and the three ladies went out for a drive. When they came in Nella glanced at the hall-table to see if Vere's hat was there; but no, the two were still missing, and it was evident that they had not returned.

She ran upstairs to take off her hat and

jacket, and Meta followed, seeming rather out of spirits.

"What is the matter, dear?" said Nella, affectionately, putting her arm round her trim little figure, and drawing her into her own bedroom.

"Nothing to make a fuss about," and the corners of her mouth went down; "but I think I am growing stupid; Godfrey is so hard to please—sometimes."

"I daresay he is; but that is his fault, not yours," afraid of saying too much lest his warmth should be up at arms. "When he is cross I should leave him to himself."

"But he never was cross with Lina. Why is it?" resting her troubled face on Nella's shoulder.

"Perhaps you have spoilt him too much."

"If I have I couldn't help it."

"If you don't love him with all your heart, pray don't think of marrying him."

"But I do," with frank simplicity. "I think I should die if anything happened to separate us."

"Then, my dear, shut your eyes to his faults, or you will never have any peace at all," said Nella, practically.

"I didn't say he had any faults. If I am stupid, of course, he can't help being cross."

"But you are not stupid."

"I think I must be, or"—hesitating a little—"did you say anything to make him angry?"

"I took up my writing-case, and nearly walked out of the room, because he would talk so."

"Oh, Nella! how could you?" in hot reproach.

"It was the only way to get rid of him."

"You ought to be kind to him for my sake."

Nella made a grimace. There was a sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel outside, and in a moment, forgetting everything else she ran to the window.

"Here they are!"

"Oh, dear, I must make haste," said conscientious little Meta. "Mamma will be wanting

me to pour out the tea," and she hurried away to take off her things.

Nella went downstairs, amused at her own eagerness. The two men were standing before the large fireplace, with their backs towards her, as she crossed the hall.

"Well, I suppose you have been spending the day at Deepden Chase?" she called out, with a smile.

Mr. Mallon turned round.

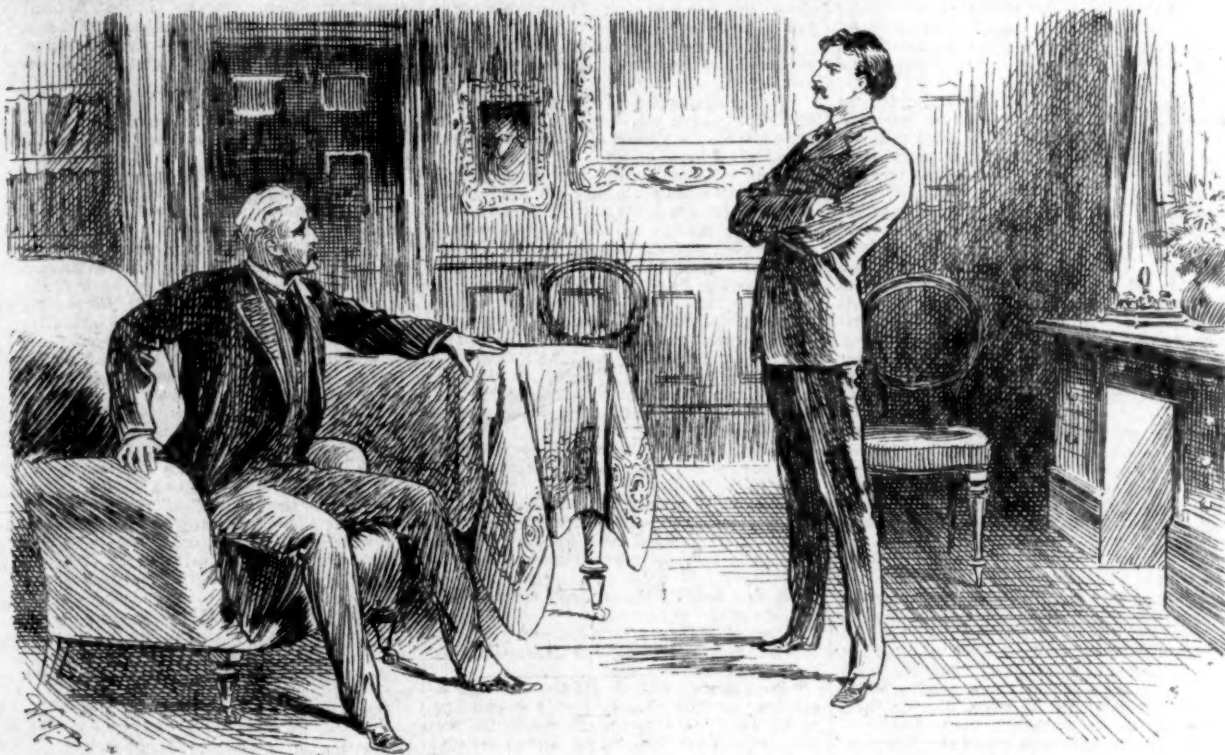
"No; we did not make any call. Vere went there for a few minutes, that was all."

Cyril kept his eyes on the fire just as if he had not heard her speak, and Nella's eagerness went from her with a sudden chill, as she walked slowly towards the door of the breakfast-room.

Had Godfrey begun his evil work already?

(To be continued.)

THE STREETS OF ANCIENT ATHENS.—It has been said that the streets of Athens, when the city was the centre of attraction of the intellectual world, resembled those of Bulgarian and Turkish towns by their narrowness and irregularity. Strangers, when they first walked along them, used to be in doubt whether they could have arrived in so famous a city. Owing to the labours of the members of the German Archaeological Institute it has become certain that Athens possessed one street at least which was tolerably wide. It was laid out between the Dipylon at the wall on the north-west and the Agora, and was therefore north of the Thesalon. The width of the roadway was about ten metres, or thirty-three feet. As the Greeks, with all their ability, had not Macadam's shrewdness, the ancient street was made up of layers of earth, which required repairs constantly. One reason for the exceptional breadth was that originally a brook ran along one side, and when it was covered over the additional space was allowed to increase the road.



"AND YOU INTEND TO MARRY HAIDÉE—YOU, WITH THIS BLACK CRIME ON YOUR CONSCIENCE!" DEMANDED PHILIP.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

CHAPTER XXIV.

If he had struck her a violent blow, and stunned her, Sybil could not have fallen back more utterly powerless than she did under the influence of those terrible words.

Every drop of blood forsook her face, her hands fell inertly on her lap, and she gazed up at him with wide, frightened eyes, that were, for the moment, true mirrors of her soul.

But she was a woman of immense nerve, of undaunted courage, and it was the suddenness of the accusation that affected her so powerfully, coming as it did just when she had felt herself safest, and when the success for which she had striven and sinned seemed almost within her grasp. In a few instants she recovered her self-possession, and sprang to her feet, facing him—her chest heaving, her eyes flashing.

"What do you mean—how dare you make such a charge—I say, how dare you?" she cried out, the words falling with a harsh, metallic sort of ring from her pallid lips.

"I dare make it, because I have means to prove it. Do you think I would impeach you, or anyone else, so foolishly, unless I were sure of the truth of what I said? Listen, and you shall here the evidence against you."

He took hold of her hands, and forced her back into her seat again, while he stood in front of her, loathing, with all his soul, the sickening task justice compelled him to perform.

"The way in which Fate has made me your Nemesis would alone be sufficient answer to those who say our life eddies in blind uncertainty, tossed about by chance, as a leaf is tossed by the wind," he began, almost solemnly. "Step by step, I am enabled to track you, although you surrounded yourself by every precaution possible, and deemed your guilty secret known only to Heaven and yourself. The first time my vague

suspicion took definite shape was last night when Dr. Clifford, unable to explain the cause of Lady Urwicke's illness, told me of the strange odour in her room, which he attributed to the flowers you had taken there. I then called to mind how, an hour or two earlier, I had seen you dropping something into them; and this gave me a clue which it was not difficult to follow up. Some years ago I took a fancy to study chemistry, and it happened that the professor with whom I read had spent the greater part of his life in India, and was thoroughly conversant with its pharmacopoeia. I remembered he once told me of a friend of his who was killed through inhaling the perfume of flowers which had been medicated with a certain deadly essence; and I particularly recalled his description of the blue shade on the face, which was the only sign the poison left—for it had this peculiarity, that the symptoms it gave rise to might easily be attributable to natural causes, and even a post-mortem examination would fail to detect any traces of it, if it were swallowed, instead of being inhaled. Now I had seen on Lady Urwicke's face that same blue tint, and her symptoms answered to those the professor described; so starting with the assumption that she was being poisoned, I asked myself this question: 'Who has a motive for wishing to get rid of her?' and the answer was, 'Miss Ruthven!'

He paused a moment; but she said nothing, only looked at him with those shining eyes, in whose depths fear and hatred struggled hard for the mastery.

"Granting this, I knew you would have every chance for carrying out your plans, because I had learned from your own lips how you took flowers into Lady Urwicke's room at night; and then, having found means and opportunity, I looked to see how you had become cognizant of the drug, and how you had obtained it. I had surprised you, some time ago, studying a book on India. I saw the same book in your room, and I was in the library when you brought it back and put it in its place; so it struck me that it was

here you had found your knowledge, and I reached the volume down, with the result of discovering a page torn out of a chapter that treated of poisons. Then I argued in this wise: 'Miss Ruthven has been studying this chapter; and, in order to make herself perfect in her lesson, took the book to her own room. To-night the doctor came unexpectedly, and remarking the density of the atmosphere in the sick chamber ordered out the flowers she had just taken in.' As a rule, there was no risk attending the roses, for they were medicated late in the evening; and only the occupier of the bed near which they were placed would feel their noxious consequences, as in the morning the windows would probably be thrown open and the fresh air let in.

"Well, for once your calculations were at fault; and as you carried the flowers out Dr. Clifford's observation made you fear lest he should by any chance suspect you. This was not the case; but there is not a saying truer than that a guilty conscience needs no accuser, and so your logical mind seized on what was most likely to connect you with the crime—supposing it to be discovered. The only thing was the presence in your private apartments of the book describing the poisons and its effect; and as that book was a rare and valuable one, and catalogued, and as you knew it would be missed if you destroyed it, you contented yourself with tearing out the leaf giving the name of the drug, and the quantities to be used, and restored it to its place. Am I right, Miss Ruthven? Was this the train of reasoning you followed?"

Not a syllable from the panting, white-faced woman in the chair, who thus saw the inmost depths of her soul held up to view, and pitilessly analysed.

"Then came the last point—namely, how you had procured the essence. And this I determined to solve, for I had a clue to it, having already seen you enter the shop of Antonio Lescarre under circumstances that, even at the time, I thought very strange. So this morning I went to London—first of all visited the British Museum, where I

obtained a duplicate copy of the book on India, and transcribed portions of those particular pages, 127 and 128. I will let you hear my extract."

He took from his pocket a sheet of paper, and read:—

"This powder may also be distilled into an essence, which is one of the surest and most deadly of known poisons. Combined with any vegetable substance, it exhales an odour that, according to the quantity absorbed, is more or less prejudicial to health, especially if it be breathed during the night. For example, five drops on a rose would be sufficient to cause death to the inhaler; while the same quantity distributed in a bouquet of flowers and placed in a room would impregnate the air, and produce faintness and lassitude in a person breathing it for any length of time. If this process were repeated for ten or fourteen nights in succession the victim would succumb either to a violent paroxysm of pain resembling convulsions, or to prostration, producing coma, and ending in death."

"I need not read you any more of what I have copied—it only gives the quantities and manner of using them; and then describes the symptoms which I have already spoken of," said Philip, replacing the paper in his breast pocket. "I have but to add, that on leaving the Museum I went to Antonio Lescarre's laboratory, and procured from him a phial of the 'eau blanche,' the same in all respects as the one he sold you, and which I have in my possession at the present moment, so you see I am armed at all points. You said you planned well, Miss Ruthven. Lucretia Borgia or La Marquise de Brinvilliers could not have calculated to a finer nicety; but, like them, you forgot one thing—that retribution which follows the footsteps of crime, dogging them on, on, until it brings them to the scaffold!"

With a faint, half-strangled cry she put up her hands to her face and covered it, as though shame had at last touched her.

"Well," she said, presently, in a dull, strained voice, "and having discovered all this, what do you intend doing with your knowledge?"

"Lord Urwick comes home to-night, so I shall go to him, produce my proofs, tell him that if he wants anything farther he can confront you with Lescarre, and leave the alternative in his hands."

"No, no!" she shrieked, falling on her knees before him, in a despair that was terrible to witness. "You will not do this—you must not! Trample on me! kill me! tear my very heart out, rather than let him know the depth of my sin!"

Philip was touched, in spite of his loathing, at her humiliation.

To fight against a woman was in itself hateful, still he felt justice demanded the exposure of her crime.

"Keep my secret!" she cried, again, convulsively clasping his hands as though nothing should ever induce her to let them go. "Impose what penalty you like on me, make your own conditions, only spare me public shame!"

She looked like the Lemia, writhing there in an agony that was tenfold worse than if it had been physical—her dark hair dishevelled and falling about her shoulders, her white fingers wreathed round his, her bosom panting as if her heart would burst all barriers in its efforts to be free—the beauty of her face made awful by its despair.

No thought of denying her crime came to her.

The accusation had been so entirely unlooked and unprepared for that it left her powerless even to disclaim it.

"Have pity—have pity!" she repeated, wildly.

He shook himself free from her clasp, and made a step backwards.

"Had you pity when you doomed that young life, and hour by hour watched it slowly sapping away!" he said, sternly. "When you placed the roses by the bedside did remorse come to you as you thought of their deadly mission! No! I verily believe you were utterly callous—you must have been when you saw all the vigour and vitality of the unfortunate

girl ebbing from her, and knew that unless you spoke death would end it!"

"She is not dead!" muttered Sybil, but there was an echo of fierce regret in her voice as she spoke.

"No—not yet, and pray Heaven, she may not die! The chances are, however, that she will. Little less than a miracle can save her, as you know."

"Then will you sacrifice the living for the dead?" she exclaimed, making one more appeal. "Can I bribe you?"—wildly. "I have jewels—I have the family diamonds in my possession—take them, if you will only spare me! You are a poor man—think what you might not do with the money they brought you!"

He turned away with a gesture full of disgust, and seeing it, and the hopelessness of her prayers, she fell forward, her head bowed in her hands, her attitude that of the repentant Magdalen.

But there was no repentance in her heart, only a fierce anger against the man who had unmasked her, an impotent desire that her purpose had been consummated.

What remorse she felt was not for the crime itself, but its discovery, which had thus lowered her to such degradation.

Suddenly she rose and pointed to the door.

"Go!" she cried, with all her old imperious command. "At least I am a free agent as yet, and I will have no one here exulting over my misery."

"Heaven forbid I should exult over yours, or anyone else's!" he exclaimed.

"Then why did you come here—why did you not wait until Lord Urwick returned, and carry your tale straight to him?"

"For a twofold reason. Firstly, I wished to guard against the possibility of your working further evil by showing you your plot was known. Secondly, as I have been taking a part I detested in thus playing the rôle of detective, I thought I would give you the chance of leaving the country at once, and in this case, perhaps, Lord Urwick may waive his right to prosecute you."

"How good of you—how grateful I ought to be!" she exclaimed, clenching her hands together till the nails cut in the delicate, pink flesh, and speaking with bitter, vehement contempt. "But for all that I tell you I hate you—I would kill you if I dared!"

And he, looking in her evil glittering eyes, did not for a moment doubt she meant what she said.

CHAPTER XXV.

EVER since the morning, when he had heard of Philip's absence, Sir Jasper Ruthven had been in a state of nervous excitement that would not let him attend to his ordinary business, or even find pleasure in the society of his betrothed.

He remained in his study, the window of which looked on the terrace, and thus commanded a view of the approach; and when he was not gazing out in the hope of seeing Greville appear, he paced backwards and forwards, absorbed in moody reverie.

Of course, when he had found the artist had left the house early, he immediately concluded he must have gone to London to see Pierson; and this step took him entirely at a disadvantage, inasmuch as he had carefully looked through all the letters that came to the house and never having found one from the barrister amongst them, felt himself safe from surprise.

He watched Philip come in on his return, and at once saw, from his pale and hurried demeanour, that something unusual was the matter—though, in this instance, as the reader knows, his penetration deceived him, and he put an entirely wrong construction on an excitement that had nothing whatever to do with his own private concerns, but was entirely on Muriel's account.

A little while later he sent a message requesting the artist to go to him in the study, and it happened that Philip met the footman just as he was leaving Sybil's apartment.

Instead of obeying the summons he proceeded to Lady Urwick's rooms, where, sitting in a

recess in the passage outside the door, he found Haldé, who held up her finger to enjoin silence.

"Lady Urwick is asleep," she murmured, "and I am keeping watch to see that no one disturbs her."

"And where is Dr. Clifford?"

"He has just gone to the surgery to make up some fresh medicine, but he will be back directly."

"Does he think his patient improving?"

"He will not say. I fancy he is waiting for Sir James C— to arrive before giving an opinion."

Philip was silent for a moment. He had intended questioning the doctor, and if he thought Muriel worse, telling him all he knew of the cause of her illness, so as to enable him to treat it the better. But for all that he was anxious to avoid the necessity, because he wished to see the Viscount first, and leave to him the initiative of acting as he pleased, and this he could now feel satisfied to do, for as Lady Urwick was asleep it followed there was no immediate danger.

It was some little time since he had last spoken to Haldé, and he was not slow to observe the change in her. All her pretty rosy colour had gone, her mouth drooped down at the corners like that of a tired child, and the eyes—those forget-me-not eyes that had formerly brimmed over with youth's sunny brightness—were now languid with an infinite weariness; as if she found the burden of life too heavy for her frail young shoulders.

"You don't look much like a happy bride-elect," he observed, unable to resist the temptation of staying to speak to her now an opportunity offered, although he knew Sir Jasper was waiting below.

The girl did not reply, but her slim white hands, that had been lying loosely on her lap, clasped themselves nervously together.

Philip came a step nearer, and bent down to look in her face.

"Tell me, Haldé—are you happy?" he said, in a low, deep voice, and just for a moment her eyes, as if compelled by some magnetic power, raised themselves to his.

"Happy!" she repeated, and in her tone was such utter, hopeless, intense despair that the one word was of itself a revelation and an answer to his question.

"Is anyone happy!" she added, quickly, as if fearful of having betrayed herself. "If you were to search the wide world over would you find, do you think, one single person free from trouble?"

"Perhaps not among the old, but among the young—yes! Youth is the season of joy, and—love."

She turned away with a little shiver.

"Still, these are not the highest goods—one can dedicate one's life to something nobler than one's own selfish enjoyments," she said, with the accent of one who was repeating an argument by which she had tried to convince herself.

"Can one? What, then, do you place higher?"

"Duty!"

"And is it duty that has forced you to act as you are acting now, that has made you give up the man you love, and promise yourself to another?" he asked, taking hold of her little chill hands, and holding them tight in spite of all her efforts to free them.

She did not answer.

"Your silence is a reply that means 'yes'—the yes you hesitate to utter," he exclaimed, triumphantly; "Haldé, I am assured, in spite of all that has passed, you still care for me. Ah! darling, come back—give up this wicked bartering of your soul—be true to yourself, love, and me!"

The passionate tenderness of his voice as he leaned over her—until his hair brushed her brow—almost unnerved her. The longing to throw herself on his breast and tell him she would let everything go by—her duty to her father, her promise to Sir Jasper—was so great, that to avoid giving way to it she shut her eyes, so that they might escape the vehement pleading of his.

"Hush!" she said, a little wildly. "Do not

tempt me—you don't know what you would have me do!"

"I would have you save yourself from the commission of a great crime that will steep you in misery as long as you live!" he answered. "I would keep you from stepping over the precipice, on whose very edge you are now standing. What do you think your life will be, tied for ever to that of a man you don't love?"

"I do not know. I try to keep myself from thinking," she said, and no reply could have been more characteristic of her nature, or more eloquent of her suffering.

"You try to keep yourself from thinking!" he echoed. "Poor little sweetheart!—then you must indeed be most miserable; and if that is the case now it will be tenfold—a hundred-fold—worse supposing you married Sir Jasper. But I tell you, Haldé, you have no right to marry him, seeing that by so doing you will ruin three lives: your own, his, and mine! Believe me, if he knew what your feelings were, he himself would shrink from making you his wife."

"You are mistaken"—with bitter, inclusive, emphatic; "he does know quite well, and it makes no difference whatever to him!"

"Then!" eagerly; "leave him out of the question, and think only of yourself and me. There is something in your conduct I cannot understand; but, for all that, I have a conviction your sentiments for me remain unchanged. Could I, indeed, think otherwise, when the remembrance of what has passed between us is ever present to me—when I yet feel the pressure of your sweet lips against mine—yet see your upraised eyes full of love that you have told me fifty times would never die! Women change, I know; but not suddenly—not in a day, an hour, as you did; and unless I believe you the falsest, cruelest, coldest of your sex, I must yet believe you love me!"

Carried away by the excitement of the moment, he caught her in his arms, and for an instant she made no effort to be free, but yielded herself utterly to the sweetness of a caress that she told herself should be an eternal farewell. Then she wrenched herself away.

"Philip!" she exclaimed, her voice low and shaken, while she threw out her hand with a piteful, imploring gesture, "for my sake, for the sake of something that I believe to be holier and more imperative than love, do not say another word to me! Go away from this house, and don't let me see you again, and then perhaps I may do what I know it is right I should do with less difficulty, less pain. Listen to me"—she came and stood before him, the pallor of her face lighted up by her steadfast eyes, while the feverish unrest of her manner had given place to a strange calm—"I can never be anything to you, and I must marry Sir Jasper. Why, I may not tell you, but the reason is one that all the sophistry in the world will not render less urgent, and so—so you and I must say good-bye! I had never intended to have told you even this much, but I cannot bear that you should think me deliberately false, and I suppose my will is as weak as my love is strong! Perhaps"—her breath coming in quick little gasps—"in the future Heaven may comfort both of us, but now there is a gulf between us that neither can span, and so—dear love—"

She broke off abruptly, and clasped her hands to her throat as if she were choking; and then, forgetful for the moment of the task assigned her, she ran swiftly along the corridor, leaving him standing there to ponder over her words.

"You wished to see me!" he said, a few minutes later, entering the study where Sir Jasper was sitting, moodily and impatient, awaiting his arrival.

"Yes. You seem, however, to have been in no hurry to present yourself," was the somewhat irritable answer, as Sir Jasper waved him to a seat.

"I did not think you had anything of importance to say to me!"

"Then you were mistaken, for what I have to say is of very great importance so far as your future is concerned."

"My future!" repeated Philip, surprised at his manner. "It is very kind of you to interest yourself in it!"

He looked rather hard at the Baronet, who was evidently nervous and ill at ease—a most unusual phenomenon, for as a rule he was remarkably self-possessed, and indeed prided himself on the perfect control he had acquired over the expression of his feelings.

"I have a motive for interesting myself in you—a very strong one," he said, slowly, while his lips twitched under his heavy moustache, "and the time has at last arrived for me to declare it! Fate plays us many strange tricks, but she never played a stranger than when she sent you under this roof, Philip Greville!"

"What do you mean?" asked the young man, eagerly, and bending forward.

His thoughts were still upon Haldé, and his first idea was that the Baronet had discovered his former relation with her, and was now about giving him his *congé*, and so preventing any possibility of future intercourse between them.

His employer's next words undeceived him.

"Do you remember the night you arrived here, when I came upon you in the corridor?"

"Yes," wonderingly.

"I met you rather suddenly, and—but perhaps you did not notice it—was somewhat upset as I saw you."

"I did notice it," put in Philip, quietly, "and I also fancied that the excuse you made hardly explained it."

"You were right. I was very much startled, and for a twofold reason. Firstly, by the mark on your arm; and, secondly, the extraordinary likeness you bore to someone I had once known and loved."

At the last two words Greville started violently—a strange sort of chill that he could no more have described than he could have explained its origin seemed to lay hold of his heart and hold him silent. It was not that he really suspected what was to follow, but rather that the shadow of the coming event had already fallen upon him.

"Do you know to whom I allude?" continued Sir Jasper, whose eyes had never left his face.

Philip shook his head.

"Grace Seaforth."

The artist received the announcement in silence.

"The resemblance was so striking that I could not get rid of the impression it had left upon me," added the Baronet, who seemed to have gained calmness as he proceeded; "and so, when Lady Urwicks came, I questioned her regarding you, and learned all the details of your history. Later on I saw a miniature she gave you, and caught a glimpse of a bundle of letters, and these letters it was a matter of such moment for me to see in order to set all doubts at rest, that I went in your room that same night and took them."

"Then it was you!" exclaimed Philip, interrupting; "and where did you disappear to from the corridor?"

The Baronet looked rather discomposed at the question.

"I contrived to get past you"—Philip knew this was untrue—"and I think you will pardon my action when you know the motive. Those letters were some I myself had written over twenty years ago."

"You! But"—after a slight pause—"they were not signed by your name."

"Yes, my second name—Philip."

There was a dead silence, during which the two men looked at each other with an intentness that seemed as if it would penetrate the mask of all outward disguises, and pierce the thoughts of the heart itself.

"Do you know in what relationship Grace Seaforth stands towards you?" inquired Sir Jasper, presently, and moistening his dry lips as he put the question.

"I believe she was my mother!"

"You are right, and your father is—"

"Who?" exclaimed the young man, and he veritably held his breath till the answer came.

"Myself!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

At first, after hearing Sir Jasper's declaration, Greville sat perfectly still, staring at him in a half stupefied way, then he sprang to his feet, exclaiming vehemently,—

"It is not true—it cannot be true! My father died before my mother, and it was the shock of his death that killed her. I remember perfectly well hearing her cry out, 'Your father is dead, Philip,' just before she was seized with the attack that directly afterwards proved fatal. She had a newspaper in her hand at the time, and I have always believed she had accidentally caught sight of an account of his death in it."

"So far you are right. I was travelling just then from Heathcliff to London, and there was a collision between the train I was in and a luggage. I was slightly hurt, but instead of putting my name down in the list of injured it was included amongst the fatalities, and this is no doubt what Grace saw."

"And how was it you did not make any effort to come to her?"

"I did make an effort as soon as my injuries would allow me to move, and went to Llan-tressan, where I found the cottage shut up, and learned the news of Grace's death and your departure with Mrs. Maxwell. I made every inquiry possible concerning the latter, but could not discover her whereabouts, and so at last I gave up the search as futile; and feeling sure you were in good hands—for an old woman in the village, who had done some work at the cottage, told me the lady had adopted you—I let the matter rest."

"A most affectionate parent!" answered the young man, his lip curling with the indignant scorn he was unable to repress. "If what you say be true—and I hope to Heaven it is not—I have, indeed, small reason for congratulating myself on the discovery of my father!"

The Baronet's eyes drooped, and he bit his lip.

"As much as I have in finding a son, seeing that you receive the announcement in such a manner," he retorted. "However, we are not women, and so we can dispense with sentiment."

"You seem to have succeeded perfectly in doing so up to the present—so far as I am concerned! But"—vehemently—"I will not accept all you say on faith. What proof have you to offer of the truth of your statement?"

"Proof! Is not my word sufficient! What possible motive could I have for desiring to claim you for my son if such were not the case? Do you think it at all likely I should attempt to coin a story like this merely for the pleasure of making myself out to be your father?"

No, Philip did not think it in the least likely, for evidently Sir Jasper entertained no particular degree of affection towards him, whether he was his father or not.

"Then why have you so suddenly awoke to the fact of my existence, after ignoring it for so many years?"

"You forget it is not so very long since you came here, and since your existence was, in a measure, forced upon me—for I will not deny I should have been much better pleased had Fate kept us apart!" returned Sir Jasper, coolly; and with a sudden change of tactics, as he observed the scarcely-veiled hostility of Philip's manner. "The sight of you only serves to remind me of a folly committed in earliest youth, that has been bitterly repented in my more mature years, and which I would fain have altogether forgotten. At first I decided to keep you ignorant of the relationship existing between us!"

"Why?"

"Because it was one I could not acknowledge before the world!"

Philip grew even paler than before, and his hands clenched themselves together with a sudden spasmodic movement, but, ere he could speak, the Baronet continued, rapidly,—

"When I first knew Grace Seaforth I was very young indeed—barely twenty; and her beauty fascinated me, as it would have fascinated any other boy of my age."

"I prevailed upon her to leave her home, and

In London we went through a ceremony which she supposed to be a marriage, but which was, in reality, nothing of the kind.

"You need not express your indignation"—as Philip half rose from his chair—"I know as well as you can tell me, that my behaviour was abominable; but I suppose other men have acted in the same way before; and I had the excuse of being madly in love with a girl whose humble birth would not allow me to marry her. I will, however, do her the justice of saying she believed herself to be my wife.

"Afterwards, to prevent any suspicion of the truth leaking out—for my uncle, Sir Edgar, was an excessively proud man, very tenacious of his family honour, and at that time I was entirely dependent on him—I took the cottage at Llantresan, and installed Grace in it; and there, some months later, you were born."

He paused a moment, but Philip had put up his hand to hide his face, and made no attempt to speak.

"I used to go down to Llantresan pretty frequently at first, but by degrees my visits grew fewer and farther between; and it happened, when my uncle died, I had not seen Grace for some time; and was quite unaware of the precarious tenure by which her life was held. Perhaps you understand now how it was that I did not persevere in my attempts at discovering your whereabouts. In point of fact, I believed you would fare far better under the protection of the lady who had adopted you than if I myself had seen to your education and bringing up."

"Of that I do not entertain the slightest doubt!" put in the young man, bitterly. "And may I ask why, having kept this secret so long, you have now thought fit to reveal it to me?"

"I have considered the matter very carefully, and arrived at the conclusion that it would be well for you to learn the truth. It has come to my knowledge that some sort of understanding formerly existed between you and Haldéa Darrell; and this being the case, it is much wiser for you not to remain under the same roof, and so I resolved to let you see exactly how matters stood; and suggest the necessity of your leaving Heathcliff with as little delay as possible."

"And you intend to marry Haldéa—yes, with this black crime on your conscience!" demanded Philip, looking at him with eyes that literally blazed in their passionate wrath.

"Certainly I do! Nothing in Heaven or earth is strong enough to prevent my marrying her!"

"Then, by Heaven, she shall learn the truth! and know you for the scoundrel you are!" exclaimed the artist, intensely excited, and totally ignoring the fact that it was his father he was addressing.

"You can tell her what you like! Nothing you say will separate us!" remarked Sir Jasper, with an evil smile, and in a voice of such calm power as carried with it a sense of conviction. "But with that you have nothing to do," he continued, changing his tone. "And I have not concluded all I have to say to you. Although I cannot openly acknowledge you as my son, I do not desire to ignore your claims, and, therefore, I have caused a deed to be drawn up, under which you will receive five hundred per annum; and further than this, I have, on your behalf, applied for a very lucrative Indian appointment under Government, which I have been fortunate enough to obtain and place at your disposal, so that, you see, a most brilliant future opens before you; and it only remains for you to avail yourself of it."

Philip rose and stood before him, his arms folded across his chest, his white face bearing on it traces of stern repression, and, strange to say, in that moment a striking and curious resemblance might have been traced between the two men.

"I thank you for your endeavours to further my interests," he said, in a voice of coldest, most inclusive scorn; "but if I were a beggar in the street, not knowing where I should get my next meal—if I were starving of hunger, dying of thirst, perishing of cold—I would not accept any help you might offer me!"

Sir Jasper shrank back in his chair. Even his callous nature was not proof against the speaker's bitter contemptuous indignation.

"I have listened to what you have told me, and I have no resource but to believe it true. For what man would deliberately make himself out to be so heartless a scoundrel if he were not guilty of the conduct of which he is his own accuser! You deserted my mother—leaving her to die alone! You cared nothing of what became of your child—for aught you knew I might have been left to the mercies of a cruel world, and dragged up in a gutter to fill, in course of time, a felon's cell! This, thank Heaven, was averted by a good woman's kindness! But that it was so I owe no gratitude to you, and I feel none. It was, as you said, a strange Fate that brought me to this house; and I should intensely regret it but for one circumstance—a good action I have been enabled to perform this very day. I believe, after all, we are merely the playthings of a Destiny that does with us what it will, and at best we can only struggle against it—never conquer! However, you need be under no apprehensions of my troubling you, or even reminding you of my existence; for this night I shall leave Heathcliff Priory, and—if I can help it—shall never set foot within its doors again!"

The Baronet drew a long breath—it might have been of relief.

"Very well. You are, of course, at perfect liberty to act as you like; all the same, I would point out that by refusing the appointment I offer you are playing the fool with your own interests!"

By this time he had quite regained his usual manner, and spoke with apparent indifference.

His listener took no notice of his remark, and he continued—

"If I thought there was any chance of your taking my advice, I should say put your pride in your pocket, and go out to India, where you can begin a new life under the most favourable auspices, and where all the gifts of Fortune will be within your reach, if you are bold enough to climb and gather them. These heroic speeches"—shrugging his shoulders cynically—"are all very well in novels, where one naturally expects to find them. But real life is very different, as you will discover when you grow older—as I have discovered many years ago. Believe me, the one infallible rule by which men learn to regulate their conduct, their convictions—nay, their very feelings themselves—is—expediency!"

He enunciated this easy, nonchalant philosophy, in which he himself was a devout believer, leaning back in his comfortable russet leather-covered arm-chair, smoothing his black moustache with one slender, silver-nailed finger, while he studied the pale, determined face opposite.

"Perhaps you are right. I do you the justice of feeling sure you practise the theory of which you are so eloquent an advocate!" responded the artist, with quiet satire, "but there is no chance of my ever becoming a convert to your opinions!"

"As you like. I cannot force you, however much I may desire it. But, at least, you will accept this!" taking up a cheque from the table and holding it out to him.

With a passionate gesture Philip snatched it from his hand, tore it in a dozen places, and flung them at his feet.

"That is my answer! The only one I shall vouchsafe to you!" he exclaimed, and, turning on his heel, left the room.

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1888. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

THE so-called Tugrin fog-dispeller, expected to prove a boon to mariners, is simply a 3 in. tube 8 ft. long, through which warm air is forced by a blower. A hole is thus cleared, enabling the navigator to see several hundred feet through the densest fog. Fog is still an unsolved problem.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY.

—101—

(Continued from page 345.)

How quiet the house is! How often he wishes he could hear her querulous voice! Anything would be better than this ghostly stillness. He grows to think quite tenderly of the dead woman; to touch all her little possessions with reverent hands; to feel the warm tears rise and sting his eyelids as old memories come thronging about him.

One evening, when he returns tired and jaded, he unlocks her desk, and proceeds to sort her papers.

First he sees a bundle of bills, and, sighing, he throws them into the fire (for, although Jane, it is a wet, cold evening, and Martha is careful for his comfort).

"Long ago, poor soul!" he thinks, "those were paid; but I am afraid the recollection of them made me hard to you!"

He takes up another packet, and his pulses stir a little as he thinks—

"After all she loved me, or she would not have kept my letters!" but as his eyes fall on the unfamiliar writing, a look of horror twitches about his mouth, and his face grows ashy in its pallor.

He reads them all, and is soon acquainted with Colin's illicit love, and the shame his wife had intended to bring upon him. He wonders why he was spared.

Later on, when the sting is less keen, Martha will tell him all!

He bows his face on his arms and sobs like a child; but, afterwards, when his emotion is spent, he rises a changed man. He has put idle regrets away for ever, he will no longer morbidly accuse himself of wrong to her; he can no longer grieve she was so early snatched away.

"It was better so," he thinks; "she might have lived to disgrace herself and me!"

But the place has grown hateful to him; and it does not surprise folks when they hear he has sold his practice, and is going to London.

Later on they learn wealth and fame are coming to him, and none is more glad than Psyche.

Two years have come and gone. Trif has gone to Africa with her missionary; Grace is engaged to Colin Renfrew (whom folly and sin are known only to Harold, Martha, and Psyche, and one is sure they will never divulge it).

Little Psyche has two admirers "dangling after her," as Martha says, but if Psyche has any lovers or no is a dead secret.

Martha is installed as cook at the Rectory, and rules as absolutely as any imperial autocrat. One morning she rushes with scant ceremony into the breakfast-room.

"Oh, Miss Psyche! he's come!—the master's come, and is asking for you! Fie, Miss Psyche, you ain't got no call to laugh!" as Psyche rises, white as death.

"I'm not laughing, Martha," mendaciously.

"I am a victim to facial distortions."

The old servant turns away, disdainfully. "He's in the front drawin' room, miss," she says to Psyche, and the girl steals away, with wildly-beating heart, to meet this man she has loved so long and faithfully.

"I have come back," he says, simply; "and I want your forgiveness! Oh, sweetheart!" drawing her near, "how I have longed for this hour! Psyche, my darling! my darling! may I hope, not only for pardon, but love? Or, will you punish me now, because of my sin, because of a foolish, short-lived fancy?"

Her arms are about his neck, her cheeks pressed close to his.

"Oh!" with a little happy sob, "why did you stay so long away!"

"Because I would not come to you empty-handed!" he answers, gladly. "Psyche, is it 'Yes!'"

"How could it be anything else!" very gladly.

"Oh, Harold! Harold! this moment's joy would atone for a life of pain!"

[THE END]

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER XII.—(continued.)

"I am glad of that—very glad!" said Mr. Randal, with a deep sigh of relief.

"So am I. He was not to be depended on, and would have failed to make her happy."

"I am of that opinion. I never quite trusted him."

"Nor did I, and I am truly glad the engagement was a private one, known only to ourselves!"

"Why?"

"Because it might militate against her future matrimonial prospects!"

"True!"

"Of course she will gain other lovers," went on Maud, feeling her way carefully; "she is so lovely!"

"Yes, I fear she will."

"Why 'fear,' father?"

"Because she is so dear to me, I do not care to part with her!"

"Yet you cannot hope to keep her with you always!"

"No, that would be selfish, I am aware, and I cannot stay with her always, either, so I suppose I shall have some day to give her to the keeping of another man. I should wish, though, it were one whom I could wholly trust, and who would let my darling live near me, while my little span of life lasts!"

"And if such an one came, you would give her to him?"

"If she loved him and wished it, yes!"

"You would part with her willingly—without any regret?"

"Yes," he answered, slowly and reflectively. "To such a man as I have in my mind's eye I think I would give her without a single regret."

"I am glad of that, father!" went on Maud, veiling the triumph shining in her eyes by dropping their heavy lids, "for the time has come, and you are called upon to make the sacrifice!"

"What do you mean?" he demanded, in utter bewilderment.

"Maggie has another lover—has received another proposal!"

"Another lover!" gasped the Rector, pushing his spectacles up to his forehead, and staring at Maud, as though he could see her better without the aid of glasses.

"Yes, another lover!"

"Who—who is it?"

"Lionel Molyneux."

"Lionel Molyneux!" repeated the old man, in a dazed kind of way, and then he remained silent, looking down at the antique tome in his hand.

"I hope you won't object to it!" continued his daughter after awhile. "Maggie is very much in love with him, and he is such a good, honest, upright fellow, so perfectly trustworthy and reliable, that I feel sure he would make her a good husband!"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Randal, still in a mechanical sort of way.

"And then he has so much to offer. Position, wealth, a time-honoured name, all we could possibly wish for!" she went on, following up the advantage she had gained, "more than we have ever dreamt of getting for our darling. She will be above all want and care for the rest of her life as his wife, and it will be a great load off our minds to think she is well provided for, won't it?"

"Yes," he agreed again.

"Then you will consent!" she asked with uncontrollable eagerness, a bright red spot burning feverishly on either cheek.

"I—I don't know!" he hesitated; "there is madness in the family, and that is a terrible drawback."

"I don't see that! The madness only breaks out now and then, and often skips a generation or two. There is not the least sign of it about Sir Lionel. He is as sane as you or I! and

surely his wealth and position weigh in the scale against the mere chance of his going out of his mind for awhile! You know they don't become hopeless lunatics, and—often after a slight attack recover their senses and become all right again!"

"Sometimes!" agreed the Rector. "But it was not so in the case of Sir Robert, this young fellow's grandfather. I remember he died mad!"

"It does not follow that Sir Lionel will, because his grandfather did!"

"No, certainly not."

"And if you refuse your consent," declared Maud, playing her trump card, "I think it will kill Maggie. She told me only yesterday that she loved him so dearly that she could not live without him."

"Does the child love him so much?"

"She simply adores him, and he worships her."

"In that case, then," said her father slowly, and somewhat reluctantly, "I suppose I must consent to it."

"It will be the best thing to secure her happiness in the future."

"I hope so."

"I am sure of it. Then I may tell Sir Lionel that you will see him, and Maggie that you won't refuse?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, father. I am sure you will never regret this. And, by the way, I think it will be as well not to mention anything about O'Hara to Sir Lionel. As it was a mere half-and-half sort of engagement, known only to ourselves, it will be better now not to publish it."

"Yes, perhaps you are right," assented Mr. Randal, eager now that he had given his consent, to get back to the perusal of his beloved books and parchments.

"I think I am," and with a triumphant smile curving her lips and a hard, steely glitter in her blue orbs, Maud left the study, and went to tell the lovers the success of her mission.

They were sitting out in the garden, under the leaf-burdened chestnut, with Jacko and Rufus stretched at their feet.

"Well, what news?" cried the Baronet, eagerly.

"Good news."

"Does he consent?"

"He will do so when you ask him to."

"How can I thank you, Maud, for your kind intervention?"

"I don't want to be thanked," she declared, smilingly. "I am only too glad to have won his consent."

"It is awfully good of you; isn't it, Maggie?"

"Yes," replied the young girl, looking at her with grateful eyes. "I am sure he would have refused me if I had gone to him first."

"Probably he would," agreed Maud, thinking of the trump card.

"I shall feel quite bold and confident now, when I go to him on Sunday."

And he did. He had no misgivings as he entered the book-lined, old-fashioned study, where the Rector was waiting to receive him with considerable nervousness.

The interview was not a very long one. In a few straightforward, manly words, the Baronet told his love, and begged for Mr. Randal's consent to his speedy marriage with his youngest daughter; and the father, pleasantly impressed by the handsome face and winning manners of his would-be son-in-law, gave it, and could not but feel that his darling was lucky to have won such a man for a husband.

"Maggie, you will let it be soon!" he pleaded that evening, as they strolled through the dewy meadows after church.

"You—you are in a great hurry," she murmured, shyly, glad of the friendly darkness that hid her blushing cheeks.

"Am I! And do you wonder at that! Eh, little woman!"

"I—I don't know."

"Don't you? Well, I think you ought. I want you for my own—my very own."

"Am I not your own now!" she asked, tenderly.

"In a way you are," he acknowledged, "but I have to share you with others—your father, your sisters. I want to have you all to myself. Life is so short. I want to grasp my happiness while I can, ere it eludes me."

"How can it elude you? I am here. I belong to you for ever," and she nestled closer to his side, within the protecting circle of his supporting arm.

"Dearest," he whispered, with a kiss pressed on the rosy mouth near his own. "I know it. Still I want you to give yourself to me absolutely—to be bound to me by the tenderest of all ties. When will you come to me?" he went on, after a pause, "to gladden my heart and home!"

"When you wish, Lionel!" she murmured, yielding to his pleadings.

"This day month, then!"

"So soon!"

"Soon, darling! It will seem an age to me. Every minute an hour, every hour a day, every day a week, until I stand at the altar beside you, and hear you say 'I will.' Say yes!"

So the "yes" he pleaded for was said, and he went away a happy man, and told his mother she would soon have to welcome a daughter-in-law. And all Wingfield was shortly electrified by the news that Sir Lionel Molyneux—the catch of the county—was going to marry the Rector's youngest daughter. And people talked of it, canvassed it, and proed and conned the whole affair; and it was announced in fashionable papers and discussed in London, but never a word of the news reached the ears of the man who was working so hard for fame and wealth in the old house on the far-away lonely Yorkshire Moor, who worked for the woman he loved with desperate energy, and thought of her as he mixed the colours on his pallet, and put in the delicate shades and tints, as the frescoes grew under his skilled hands, and decorated the walls of Mr. Belton's mansion.

He dreamt a dream that was never to be realised, indulged in sweet hopes that were fated to be broken and marred, lived in a fool's paradise, and was happy, fortunately not having the power to look into the future that was destined to be so blank and dreary for him, and see the sorrow that was to come, and be his portion for all the years of his life, be they few or many.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEDDING DAY.

LADY MOLYNEUX received the tidings her son brought with great gladness. She had feared something might go wrong in his love affair, and bring on the malady she dreaded to see appear. Therefore it was with unqualified delight that she heard matters were settled—even the day named, and she seconded her son in his efforts that everything should be ready in a month.

So, while the wheat was yellowing, and the barley ripening, and the scarlet poppies and yellow charlocks flaunted their gay blossoms on the hill-sides, and the vivid purple flowers of Yew's looking-glass began to show amid the corn-fields, the preparations for Maggie's wedding went on apace.

Sir Lionel had been very liberal to his intended. The engagement ring was a hoop of magnificent opals and diamonds—his favourite stones—very different to O'Hara's shabby little love-token, and he had lavished costly jewels of all sorts on the girl who was to be his wife; while Lady Molyneux, telling Maggie with a charming smile that as she had no mother she must let her take the place of her lost parent, and provide the trousseau, had bought the most lovely dresses and lingerie imaginable, such as the Rector's daughters had never seen, but only dreamt of before; and the bridal robe, fashioned by Eliza, was a triumph of millinery art—a mass of creamy satin and cobweb-like filmy lace—a sort of dress that would make a plain woman look pretty, and a pretty one lovely.

The days passed with dream-like rapidity to

the fair fiancée—flaw by on rosy wings. She was constantly with Sir Lionel, who was devoted and attentive enough to have satisfied the most exacting of women; and she was not at all exacting, but was thankful with a sweet, shy humility for all his affection and devotion, taking what he gave with gratitude and content.

She had learnt the great lesson of life—to love and be beloved—and her happiness would have been perfect but for the remembrance of her promise to O'Hara, which ever hovered like a dark cloud on the horizon, and dimmed and marred her joy.

The wedding-day dawned at last—a glorious September day. The sky deep blue, crossed with bars of golden and purple cloud, the sun shone brightly on hill and valley, and woodland, where autumn was touching the foliage with her ruddy fingers, turning the tender green to russet, orange, crimson and brown. The "gorgeous sunset of the year" was at hand. Already "golden leaves floated on silver mares," and the elms and limes were beginning to lose some of their gay livery.

The avenue of olden trees at the Hall was all aglow with rich tints, and the emerald hue of the turf was broken here and there by the red and purple of the fallen leaves, while the fern and tawny bracken burned with a last fading flush.

The old grey ivy-grown church at Wingfield was thronged with spectators long before the bride arrived; domestic and villagers, and some of the poorer gentry from the places around, whose names did not figure on Lady Molyneux's visiting list, and were not invited to the wedding feast, came to see and comment on the proceedings.

Conspicuous among the crowd was Nance Twerton, accompanied by her little grandchild, still attired in the antique cape, and with a great slanting penthouse of coarse white straw, meant to do duty for a bonnet, taking the place of the huge frilled cap, and framing her wrinkled, time-worn face.

She commented freely on everyone as they arrived, much to the amusement of the on-lookers, who seldom had a chance of hearing or seeing the queer old custodian of Molyneux's Rest.

"Loch me, but he's a bonnie liddle!" she exclaimed, as the Baronet arrived, accompanied by his best man, Clinton, looking supremely happy and extremely handsome. "He'll na lulk as bright in te yearn to come thae! There'll be sorra an' tears and ill times for te mon—"

"Hush! Nance. What a bird of ill-omen you are," said Brenshaw, Lady Molyneux's maid, "the master will hear your senseless chatter."

"Tis no senseless chatter," retorted Dame Twerton, hotly, "and I'll no hauld my tongue. Why said I! 'Tis truth I speakit. I ken more o' te family than any ither body, save his mither."

"That's the very reason why you should keep quiet," said the maid, who had been with Lady Molyneux thirty years, and had been made somewhat of a confidante. "Her ladyship wouldn't be over well pleased if she heard you; and sep, she's looking at you now."

"Ah! weel," rejoined the crone, as she met her mistress's eye, and sank down into a seat as though to avoid scrutiny. "I've ne'er been aye to clash, as I'll sit me down here a bit, and dinna fash yersel; I'll no gie me tongue giff license mair."

But in spite of this announcement she kept on crooning and muttering, and breaking out every now and then into a queer little laugh, like the creaking of an old door, and she gibbered and chuckled in quite a ghastly fashion when Maggie appeared leaning on her father's arm.

Very fair she looked as she came slowly down the aisle, her loveliness almost too brilliant in its setting of satin, and exquisite lace, and natural flowers, with the famous opal and diamond ornament securing the veil, and gleaming on her neck and arms. The effect was dazzling, and Sir Lionel uttered an involuntary exclamation of admiration as he stepped forward to meet her.

A very lovely group it was that gathered round the altar. Maggie had twelve bridesmaids—her sisters, Eunice, the two Misses Travers,

and six other young ladies, all more or less beautiful. But amid the maids Maud shone as the fairest. She had chosen the dresses, and the delicate blue showed up to advantage the pale gold of her hair and the fairness of her complexion.

Very queenly, very fascinating she looked, and Clinton, as he gazed, wished that he was the bridegroom and she the bride, and paid very little attention to the service which was joining irrevocably the hands of the betrothed lovers.

There was evident agitation on Maggie's side, but Sir Lionel's voice was firm and clear as he uttered the words that bound him for ever to the woman he loved, and his hand was perfectly steady as he slipped the magic circlet that made her his on to the little trembling finger.

She recovered her composure, though, later on, and sat at the head of the table at breakfast beside her husband, her cheeks flushed with a damask rose bloom, her eyes sparkling like twin stars, fair indeed to look on. And the man beside her could hardly crush down the love that surged in his heart, hardly resist the temptation that assailed him, to take her in his arms and press his lips to the quivering, scarlet mouth. He longed for the moment to come when they would be released from the society of their friends, when he would have her all to himself—his very own.

It was an extremely hearty "Thank Heaven, at last!" that he ejaculated, when, after running through a perfect cloud of rice, they entered the carriage, and were driven off as fast as four greys could go to Inchfield Station, en route for the Continent, and he was free to clasp her in his arms, and rain down kisses on the exquisite face that strove to hide its burning blushes on his breast.

"May they be happy," said Clinton, plonely, raising his eyes to Heaven as the carriage dashed away.

"I echo that wish," cried Maud, joyously, with a clear, ringing laugh. She could afford to laugh now. Maggie was safely married, her revenge upon O'Hara secured.

"I hope you will echo another wish of mine," said the gallant Captain, eagerly.

"What is that?" she asked, lifting her eyes, but dropping them again at once as she encountered the passionate gaze on his.

"Promise that you will echo it first!"

"How can I do that," she objected, "when I don't know what it is?"

"I think—I hope that it is one you will not object to."

"What is it?"

"No, I can't tell you. Promise first!"

"I promise."

"I wish, then, that I may be married soon—before the year is out."

"And I echo the wish," she responded, giving him one swift glance from a pair of merry, mischievous orbs.

"And may it be to the lady I love!"

"And may it be to the lady you love."

"Have you any curiosity to know who the lady is, Miss Randal?"

"I am never curious, Captain Clinton," she retorted.

"Don't you think you could be a little curious for this occasion only? just to oblige me?"

"I might be, but—"

"But what?"

"Telegram, sir," broke in the voice of one of the Molyneux's pink-legged powdered-headed footmen, and a silver salver with a yellow envelope on it was presented to Clinton.

"Thanks," he said, slowly, as he took it up. "I wonder what this is! Bad news, I'm afraid."

"I hope not," said Maud, a sudden sharp pang of fear at her heart, lest now, at the eleventh hour, she should lose her quarry.

"I hope not, also. But I never yet had pleasant news by telegram."

"They are generally unpleasant. Here is your brother," she added, quickly, as Clifford's half-brother came quickly down the terrace towards them.

The two resembled each other strongly, but Enrico was far handsomer than his elder brother.

His mother was an Italian, a Neapolitan, and from her he inherited the smooth skin of an orange fairness, tinged with red, the straight features, the blonde hair with golden lights, and the eyes that were so thickly lashed that when the lids lifted suddenly they seemed to burst upon the beholder like bits of heaven—so blue, so full of light and life and expression were they. It was an exquisite face, so perfect in colouring, and in every respect like those we see in Greek sculpture, but Miss Randal regarded the possessor of it coldly. She felt he had interrupted the declaration that was trembling on the Captain's lips, and which she was quite ready to listen to now that she had settled Maggie's affairs in such a satisfactory manner.

"They brought me a telegram which was for you," he began, in a liquid voice with just a suspicion of an accent in it. "I trust there is nothing wrong, Clifford!"

"I have not read it yet. Have I your permission," asked the Husar of Maud.

She bowed an assent, and while pretending to study the landscape, watched him furtively under the shadow of her long lashes.

A frown crossed his brow as he read, and he bit his nether lip rather fiercely, while his whole face clouded.

"I wonder what it is," she wondered, uneasily.

"Enrico," he said, at last, looking up, "I want a word with you. Will you excuse us, Miss Randal?" he went on.

"Oh, certainly," she rejoined.

"And will you?" he added, in a low tone, meant only for her ear, "grant me an interview an hour later in the rose-garden?"

"Yes," she murmured, a slight blush dying her cheek; and then, as the brothers left her, she joined a bevy of girls clustered on the terrace beneath, and listened, and laughed, and tried to appear interested in their rapid conversation, and their eulogies on her sister and her attire, and was politely attentive when Aunt Pattison, who had come from London for the wedding, and who had astonished the good people of Wingfield and the parts around by the antique gorgeousness of her attire, regaled her with a long account of her household affairs, and the amount she had saved during the past year by looking after the candle-ends and empty bottles, and by having her plate-crusts made with dripping, and her cakes minus currants; and all the while the garrulous old woman talked she was wondering what news the telegram had contained—wondering if he had asked her to meet him in the rose-garden to know if she would be his wife, or simply to tell her that he had to leave Molyneux Hall, and merely wanted to say adieu.

She had been a fool, she told herself, bitterly, worse than a fool not to have let him come to the point weeks ago—not to have secured him when he was in the humour to be secured. Now it might be too late; something unforeseen might have come between them, might take him away, and perhaps he would never return, would forget her in the years to come.

Why had she been guilty of the folly of "playing" a man who was such a desirable match, who was flattered and admired, and sought after, who could pick and choose where he listed? It was an unpardonable mistake—a great error. She was in her twenty-seventh year, and though her blonde beauty was as fresh as ever, still she knew well that a woman's chances of matrimony declined rapidly after she has turned twenty-five. And she must marry, it was a desperate necessity.

Her father had nothing to leave but the shabby furniture of the Parsonage, and a few rare books—a sorry bequest—in value worth under a couple of hundred pounds. She could not live on it; she would have to go as a governess (and she hated children) or as a companion to some snuffy old horror of a woman, who would hardly ever stir from home, bury all her bright beauty in the sick-room of a querulous quail invalid. She! who loved gaiety, admiration, power, plenty, all the good things of this world. What a fate! And she was pretty certain that she would have to face it alone; for Laura, so long, was going to bestow her hand upon Walter

London, and accompany him to Africa, to try the effect of her best-tes and Bibles on the aboriginals of that quarter of the globe; while Kate, she shrewdly suspected, would become Mrs. Thornton before many months rolled on, as the sturdy North-country squire had been making the running with great vigour, and had obtained Mr. Randal's rather reluctant consent to his suit.

"What are you thinking about, Maud?" said her aunt's voice, breaking across her disagreeable reflections.

"I—hardly—know," she answered, with some hesitation. "My thoughts were indefinite."

That wasn't a fact. They had been very definite, unpleasantly so, but she had not the least intention in the world of acknowledging it.

"Well, I wouldn't think, if I were you."

"Why not?"

"Because it makes you look old and careworn, and traces lines about the corners of your eyes," was the consoling rejoinder.

"I can't help it. One must think sometimes."

"I should try not to, if I were you. Thought prematurely ages people."

"Do you never think?" queried the niece, wondering vaguely if she didn't how she managed so well about the dripping pie-crusts, the currant-less cakes and the candle-ends and empty bottles, which she reflected to answer well would require a great deal of thought.

"Sometimes," replied the old lady, placidly, smoothing down the folds of her purple moiré, which was indeed antique, with a plump, be-ringed hand. "Then it is different with me. I am no longer young. I have no intention—no wish to—to seek a second husband (it would have been odd if she had, considering she was over seventy, and that her first spouse had not been famed for his virtues). Thought won't leave its mark upon me, but you have to consider your personal appearance. Your face is your fortune, and I am surprised you haven't brought it to a good market."

"I haven't had many opportunities, aunt," she said, bitterly, a sense of shame and defeat creeping over her.

"You had a season in town with me?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't do any good?"

"No."

"You were as cold as ice, and as critical as a duchess, and now I think you will be an old maid, for you are certainly not as good-looking as you were."

"I dare say I shall be, aunt," she agreed, quietly, though she was not much pleased to hear about the loss of looks, as she was going to meet her lover.

"There is one thing—you don't seem to mind about it."

"What is the use of minding?" she asked, rather wearily, as she rose and turned to go. "If no one will have me I can't avoid my fate, and shall accept it without a murmur," and not waiting to hear another word she went swiftly down the terraces, across the lawn to the rose-garden, where Clinton was waiting for her, walking up and down the narrow paths, kicking the pebbles as he went, his hands plunged far into his pockets, his head drooped.

He came forward to meet her the moment he saw her, lifting his hat, and smiling a smile which chased away some of the gloom that lay like a cloud on his fair, debonaire face.

"This is very good of you," he began; "very kind to accord me this interview. Of course, you know, Miss Randal, that I had a motive for asking you to meet me here!"

"Yes," she said, gravely.

"And that my asking you was caused by news contained in the telegram?"

"Yes."

He was silent for a moment after that, and then said, abruptly, without any preamble,—

"The telegram was from my colonel. It was a command to rejoin at once. My regiment is under orders to go to India. We sail the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow!" gasped Maud, every vestige of colour forsaking her face,

leaving it white to the very lips, at this intelligence; for though she was too cold to love anyone very ardently, still she liked the gay, fair-faced Hussar, and his staying probably meant marriage and a fine house, and all sorts of luxuries, and his going poverty in the present and drudgery in the future, and the blow fell with stunning effect.

"Yes, the day after to-morrow." Then looking up and seeing the almost agonised expression on her white face, he cried, "Miss Randal—Maud, is my going so much to you—do you care?"

"Care!" she repeated, in a dazed kind of way.

"Yes, care. Tell me," he went on eagerly; "is it anything to you?"

"So much," she replied, tremulously, feeling now she dared not play with him, "that—that I cannot—tell you."

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered, seizing her cold hands and imprisoning them in his. "I feared you would be indifferent; but this—this—emboldens me to speak—to tell you how much I love you—to ask if you can return my affection! I would have spoken before," he continued; "but I dreaded a refusal. I suppose every fellow does. You always seemed so cold and indifferent to me—"

"I didn't mean to be," she interrupted, penitently.

"Did you not?" he smiled, pressing her slender fingers closely. "I thought you were, and I thought you did not care for me. Was I wrong?"

"Yes," she murmured, faintly.

"Then you love me?"

"Yes."

"And will be my wife?"

"Yes," she answered, again, this time letting him see the azure eyes that had hitherto been veiled by their heavy lids, for a load was lifted off her heart, and the relief was exquisite.

"Dearest!" and he stooped and laid his lips against the soft cheek, "I have found my happiness only to lose it," he said, after a while, when they had indulged in some of the rhapsodies peculiar to newly-declared lovers. "I must leave the Hall to-night."

"So soon?"

"Yes, I have only to-morrow to get my things together. You will write to me very often, Maud!"

"Yes."

"And I will come back for you, as soon as this affair at Cabul is settled. You won't mind coming to India, will you?"

"No, I shall like it," she answered, truthfully knowing that it was exactly the place to suit her. "I should like any place with you," she added, feeling that she ought to say something tender.

"You darling!" he whispered, tightening the arm that was round her slender waist, and indulging in a few more kisses to go on with, as he quaintly put it. "We must talk seriously now," he declared, turning his lips resolutely away from the soft cheek in such tempting juxtaposition to his own. "I will see your father to-night, or is it better for me to write to him?"

"It will be better for you to see him," she replied, knowing that the Rector, tired with the—for him—unwonted excitement of the day, would probably give in at once, and say "yes" to the gallant Hussar's request to carry off his last unappropriated daughter, and that if he were written to, and could consider the matter in cold blood, that he might refuse to part with the last stay and prop of his old age.

"Then shall we go and look for him, now?"

"Yes, we shall find him in the library, I think. You know he has a perfect mania for books."

"Yes, I have heard so. I hope he will be in a good temper, or my suit won't prosper."

But it happened that it did prosper, for Mr. Randal, buried amid ancient folios, of which there were many in the Moynex library, tired and bewildered with the events of the day, and not knowing quite what he was doing, gave his consent at once, and sent Maud and her lover away perfectly happy and contented, to inform

the public in general of the event, and to receive congratulations, which poured in on them unceasingly from everyone, including Aunt Pattison, who reversed her decision, and declared that her second niece was growing handsomer every day, and concluded by informing Kate in a sepulchral whisper that she thought Maud was a sly puss, as she had never whispered a word to her about having a lover who was likely to propose, and had told her only that day that she would most likely be an old maid.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I found she was false, tho' she promis'd me fairly."

THINGS settled down pretty well into the ordinary daily groove at the Hall and the Parsonage, after the excitement and bustle of the wedding were over. Aunt Pattison made a little disturbing element at the latter place, as she had decided to stay for a fortnight or three weeks with her brother, and go up to town with him.

He had some business to see to, and proposed taking Laura and Kate with him, so that they might have an opportunity of buying things for their trousseau, under the supervision of their aunt, who declared they would save a lot of money if they bought materials and coupled the long winter evenings in making them up; and the two girls, not having much to spend, thought it a capital plan, and acquiesced at once, to Maud's great disgust, who said a woman was generally only married once in her life, and as it was a unique event, she might as well have a decent gown on her back, and not a dowdy affair, patched up at home.

But the brides-elect, for once in a way, turned a deaf ear to her counsel, and determined to follow their aunt's advice. They were a little bit bitten by her mania for saving and cheese-paring; and Kate had even gone to the length of demanding a strict account of the candle-ends from Anne, who naturally resented it, and spoke her mind freely; whereupon she was called an insolent hearsey by Mrs. Pattison, and a pitch battle ensued, which did not add to the tranquillity of the house.

Altogether Maud was far from sorry when their guest returned to town, accompanied by her brother and Laura and Kate, and she was left in lonely solitude at the old Parsonage.

She had plenty to do, for she had promised to look after Laura's poor people, and distribute tracts among them and other holy works, so that their souls might not suffer by the pious one's absence; and her sisters had given her a plentiful supply of needlework to occupy her time, and save them trouble on their return, and then her thoughts were company enough—they were such pleasant ones.

She was only too pleased to have no one to talk to, as she could build castles in the air, plan out what she would do in that future which promised to be such a rosy one, and think of her lover, and read the letters he had been able to send her, and look at the ring which sparkled on the third finger of the left hand, sent by Clinton the day before he sailed; but across all her rosy dreams never flashed a single thought of the man she had betrayed.

On Maggie's wedding-day she had, so to say, done with him.

The girl he loved was married, could be nothing to him; her revenge was secured, and she let him drop into the limbo of oblivion, not troubling herself to write to him again after the one lying letter she had sent him some ten days before her sister's marriage, and taking not the least notice of the passionate, appealing epistles that came both for her and Maggie, beyond glancing over them and then throwing them into the fire without saying a word; and Maggie, believing Maud had written explaining matters to Terence, and concluding as she did not hear from him that he had quietly accepted his fate as inevitable, had gone away to the sunny South with her husband, feeling very thankful that he had not made a disturbance, but had taken the matter so coolly, and little knowing the treachery

and cruelty of which her sister had been guilty, and which was to recoil on her head with such bitterness in the future.

Maud, however, was very much mistaken if she thought O'Hara would be content to remain long without letters or news of his *fiancée*, and she woke up to that fact in a rather sudden and unpleasant manner two days after the departure of the others for town.

She was walking in the garden pacing up and down the narrow paths between the beds gay with heartsease, maiden plinks, musk mallow, scarlet geraniums, and other autumn flowers, with little Jacko trotting along at her side.

Her eyes were bent on the ground, her thoughts as usual busy, so busy that she did not notice the tall, manly figure coming rapidly down the lane which ran between the orchards where the red-cheeked apples clustered thickly on the boughs.

It was only the click of the wicket-gate as it opened that attracted her attention, and looking up quickly she saw Terence O'Hara before her.

They stood for a full minute gazing into each other's faces. His was white and haggard, and in the blue eyes was a keen anxiety; hers flushed darkly, while over it spread a queer look of mixed triumph, and fear and exultation.

"Maggie," he said at last; "where is she? What is it? I have not heard from her. Is she well—tell me—is she well?"

"Quite well," replied the woman who faced him, coolly.

"Then why has she not written?" he burst out eagerly, the foreboding of evil that had been on him during the last few weeks growing stronger.

"She has had something else to do, I fancy." "Something else to do! What do you mean? I want to see her. Is she there?" and he made a movement to go on to the house.

"You won't see her there," said Maud without stirring from her position.

"Not there! Why—where is she?"

"Abroad."

"Abroad!" he gasped, a greyish pallor stealing over his face.

"Yes."

"What is she doing there? Who is she with?"

"Do you want very much to know?"

"Very much! Maud, you torture me. Tell me, is my darling ill? Why has she left England—who is she with?"

For a moment she remained silent, watching the look of fear in his eyes, keeping him on the rack, then she said quite coolly and calmly,—

"She left England to go on her honeymoon. She is with her husband."

O'Hara reeled and staggered at her words like a man who has received a mortal blow, covering his eyes with his hands, but the next instant he dashed them down exclaiming, "It is false, my darling would never be untrue to me!"

"It is not false. It is the simple truth."

"Unsay those words; for Heaven's sake, Maud, unsay those words!" he cried, wildly, grasping her arm, looking at her with the glance of a hungry man.

"I can't unsay them. It is the truth. She is married and with her husband."

"Oh! Heaven!"

They were only two words, but the concentrated anguish of a lifetime spoke in them, the terrible agony of a broken heart, a wrecked soul.

He leant against a tree motionless, with closed eyes and clenched hands, outwardly like one dead save for the hard thick breathing, that came in gasps and sobs from his corpse-like lips. He was overwhelmed, crushed. His soul was killed, though his body lived, and the pitiless woman who had wrought the ruin stood by and looked on at his agony unmoved.

She was not utterly heartless, but she was what is nearly as bad, very cold, with little or no feeling for the troubles and pains of others, and a great capacity for revenge; and as she read his face she saw that she had won her revenge—fully—amply. Horrible pain, blank despair, was the portion of the man who had slighted her and wounded her pride.

"It's a very unfortunate affair. I'm quite sorry for you," she said after awhile, with a little covert sneer. "But I dare say you'll get over it in time."

At the sound of her voice he opened his eyes, and looked at her with a stare of tearless, stony grief.

Her words reached him, but not the sense of them. He felt dazed and bewildered, and numbed by grief. It was as though the life-blood had been wrung from his heart, and he left powerless—helpless. He had been caught by a great passion, and it had swept him away, shipwrecked all that was best of him, leaving nothing but what was base and degraded behind. Now he would ever go down—down—into a bottomless abyss of misery and hopelessness. He would never escape—never rise to the surface again. He was beggared of all that is fairest and best—all worth living for.

"Maggie was very sorry also," continued Maud after another pause, "and hoped you wouldn't mind, and that you would forgive her."

At the mention of the beloved name, some of the bewilderment and numbness that held him seemed to pass away.

He started forward and stood erect, out from the shadow of the chestnut-tree, into the full blaze of the mellow sunlight, that fell on his haggard, cruelly-drawn face and despairing eyes.

"Forgive!" he muttered, hoarsely, through lips that seemed too stiff to form the words, "Forgive!"

"Yes," said his companion calmly, "forgive. You know she couldn't help falling in love with another man. Nobody could, and I have very little doubt but that you, some day, will be happy with another woman. Don't you think you will?"

"No."

His answer was short and stern. He was recovering himself, and he looked at her steadfastly, wondering what manner of woman she could be to say such a thing to him at such a time.

"Really now. You don't mean that, though."

"Mean what?"

"That you will never care for another woman."

"I mean it only too well," he rejoined, curtly. "I loved her"—his voice broke here—"as never before was woman loved. She was all to me—my beginning and end. She filled my thoughts in the day—my dreams at night! I worshipped the very ground she trod on—envied the air she breathed, worked for her, that I might win her soon—lived for her, and, had she willed it, would have died for her gladly; and in return she has betrayed me. She is false—false!" and with a moan he swerved back against the supporting tree, overcome, once more, at the thought of her treachery, which seemed blacker to him than it really was.

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1855. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

A SPECIES of bean which resembles a cigar both in form and colour, growing wild in Batavia, has a peculiarly energetic manner of scattering the seeds. If one of these little fruits be thrown into a basin of water it will rest quietly on the surface for from two to five minutes; then it will explode with violence, hurling most of its contents into the air with a noise for all in the world like a small torpedo. It is hardly necessary to say that this phenomenon is caused by the pressure of the elastic substance of its interior overcoming the resistance of its hard outer shell. The fruit usually splits open lengthwise. If plucked before maturity and allowed to ripen in a warm spot it opens gradually from apex to base, making, as it were, a pair of diverging horns starting from the same point. If left to ripen on the plant—since the process is quicker and the internal moisture greater—the opening is sudden and accompanied with a slight noise, though this is much less than that which takes place when it has been placed in water.

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FACETIE.

A TIMELY WARNING: Mamma (authoritatively): "Maud and Clara, leave the room! Your father has mislaid his glasses!"

JUDGE: "What is your age?" (Female witness hesitates.) Judge: "Don't hesitate in answering the question. The longer you hesitate the older you'll be."

"Some day," said the high-browed young man, "I expect to have the world at my feet." "What have you been doing all this time," sneered the cynic—"walking on your hands!"

SHE: "I hope you can come next Thursday. We're having some music, and a supper after." He: "Oh, yes; I'll come. But—er—I may be late!"

"I'll make a fortune out of my new musical box. You put a penny in the slot and—" "And the thing plays a popular air!" "No; it stops playing one."

WAGGLES: "There is only one thing as hard to find in this world as the North Pole." Jaggles: "What's that?" Waggles: "The fellow who gets lost looking for it."

"My boy says his ambition is to grow up to be a man just like his father." "I wouldn't let that worry me. When I was your boy's age I had a burning desire to be a pirate."

STAYLATE: "Just one more kiss, darling! Just one and then I'll go." Voice from the stairs: "For Heaven's sake, Nan, give him one. It's cheap at the price."

"So you refused him?" "Yes; I told him it was better to make a great many men happy by being engaged to them than to make one miserable by marrying him."

A MAN told his daughter that if she learned to work he would give her a surprise. She learned the art, and he surprised her by discharging the servant-girl.

SHE (enthusiastically): "Oh, George, don't you think the greatest joy in life is the pursuit of the good, the true and the beautiful?" He: "That's what I am here for."

"WHAT became of that Samuel's girl that Potterby was flirting with last summer?" "You mean that girl that Potterby thought he was flirting with. She married him."

"How do you make out that you came off better than your accomplice when you were convicted and he acquitted?" "Because I had only to pay the penalty, while he had to pay the lawyer."

"GERTRUDE, I've brought you home two bushels of artificial purple violets." "Two bushels! Have you lost your mind?" "No; but I heard you say you wished you had as many on your hat as that girl next door."

"I SEE that you have shut off all the gas in your house and are using nothing but candles. What's that for?" "Merely out of curiosity. I want to see if it will make any difference in my gas bills."

"WHERE does sky terriers come from?" asked four-year-old Maggie. "Humph!" exclaimed her brother, who is two years her senior; "anybody ought to know that. They come from the sky when it rains cats and dogs."

SHE: "Don't you think you had better have a shine? Your shoes are very dingy." He: "Why, they don't need it—they are patent leather!" "The patent must have expired; you had better get it renewed."

YOUNG MISTRESS: "I don't see why you should leave me so suddenly. I'm sure I've done all I could to help you with the housework, and I have done all the cooking." Maid: "Yes'm, that's what's the matter." "What is it?" "I can't stand y'r cooking."

"I HAVE here," said the caller, who entered the sanctum with three bows and a wave of his hand, "a few little poems that I jotted down in leisure moments, just for my own amusement." The editor looked them over. "Wish our readers were as easily amused as you are," he snapped. "Good day."

OLD FARMER: "That's a fine lot of pigs over there. What do you feed them on?" Amateur: "Why, corn, of course." Old Farmer: "In the ear?" Amateur: "Certainly not; in the mouth."

LITTLE ETHEL: "My sister May loves you very dearly, Mr. Softhead." Mr. Softhead (delighted): "Ah, sweet child; here is sixpence for you. Now, tell me, dearie, why do you say that your sister loves me?" Little Ethel: "Why, 'cause when I said the same thing to Mr. Binker and Mr. Dinker they gave me sixpence too."

"PAUL, I'm not at all pleased with the report you bring home from school!" "I know you wouldn't be, father, and I told the teacher so, but it didn't seem to make any difference!"

AN Irishman just returned from a few days holiday in London was asked by one of his friends how he liked the Great City. "Och, ahure, an' it's a fine town bedad! But, me faith, it's a powerful lot of walkin' I've had to git through with. For I walked every blessed bit o' two miles behind a 'bus before I could cross the street!"

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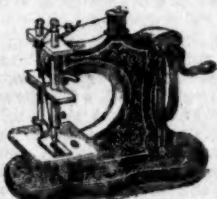
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SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales does not have the privilege of free postage, and his stamps, stationery and telegrams cost him £1,000 per annum.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has in his keeping the book in which the signatures of all Royal brides and bridegrooms married in England are written.

THE Duke of York went to Liverpool on Wednesday, the 19th ult., to distribute the prizes on board the school-ship *Conway*, which lies in the Mersey. He was the guest of Lord and Lady Darby at Knowsley during his visit to Lancashire.

QUEEN VICTORIA has been quite outdone by the Emperor Francis Joseph in the matter of the bestowal of titles, orders, and decorations at a jubilee. In three days Austria's ruler gave away 4,500 of these baubles, and for weeks past the only two firms in Vienna which make them have been working day and night in order to catch up with the demand.

THE Danes are exercised over the fact that the members of the Royal Family cannot agree to worship in the same church. The King attends services in the Established Lutheran Church; one of the princesses is a Dissenter; Princess Marie goes to the Roman Catholic Church; the Russian Empress Dowager is a Greek Catholic; while another daughter, the Duchess of Cumberland, when in Copenhagen, attends worship in the German Reformed Church.

THE Prince of Wales was to have spent three weeks at Marlbad last summer, but his accident at Waddesdon Manor prevented him from going abroad. His Royal Highness was greatly pleased with Marlbad when he paid his first visit in 1897, and derived much benefit from a course of the waters. The Prince has decided, all being well, that he will return to Marlbad this season, and His Royal Highness is going there during the second week in August, directly he leaves Cowes, and is to stay at the Hôtel Klünger, where he will occupy the same apartments as in 1897. The Prince will be attended to Marlbad by Mr. Sidney Greville.

BECAUSE in Spanish etiquette the King can only associate with his equals, the little King Alfonso can have no playmates. He cannot play with his own sisters as an ordinary boy might. Plenty of toys he has always had, among them a fine rocking-horse, covered with the skin of a real pony. This and his black cat Perito have been two of his greatest comforts, so he is a real boy after all. Some wise head and kindly heart, perhaps the Queen-mother's, managed to get around the rule that cut the boy off from companions of his own age. A boy regiment has been formed for him. In it are 450 boys in uniform led by a band.

IT is a well-known fact that most sovereigns are early risers. The German Emperor is at work in his study by 5 A.M., while he is in the saddle by six o'clock, generally accompanied by the Empress, who quite shares her husband's taste for early hours. The Queen-Regent of Spain makes a point of attending early Mass at six o'clock in the morning; while the Kings of Italy, Roumania, and Württemberg are all early risers. The young Queen of the Netherlands rises at seven o'clock and has her breakfast before commencing her duties, and her mother makes a practice of also rising at this hour. King Oscar of Norway and Sweden is a very early riser, and generally spends the first hours in study, and after breakfast transacts State business.

THE Crown Princess of Denmark is the tallest Royal lady—if not the tallest woman—in Europe, her height exceeding 6 feet 2 inches. Her grandmother was Mlle. Désirée Clary, the daughter of a stockbroker of Marseilles. This young woman joined Napoleon Bonaparte, afterwards Emperor, in order to marry Bernadotte, who finally became King of Sweden and Norway. The Crown Princess of Denmark is the richest as well as the tallest European princess, having inherited £5,000,000 from her maternal grandfather, Prince Frederick of the Netherlands, in addition to the fortune left her by her father.

STATISTICS.

NEARLY five-eighths of the steamers in the world are under the British flag.

THE flower trade of London is estimated to amount to £5,000 a day.

THERE were 249,145 marriages in England and Wales last year, more than in any year since 1876.

THE latest Government census in India showed 6,016,759 girls between five and nine years of age who were already married, of whom 170,000 had become widows.

GEMS.

A GOOD name, like good will, is got by many actions and lost by one.

WE exaggerate misfortune and happiness alike. We are never either so wretched or so happy as we say we are.

IN the man whose childhood has known careens and kindness there is always a fibre of memory that can be touched to gentle issues.

GOOD breeding carries along with it a dignity that is respected by the most petulant. Ill breeding invites and authorises the familiarity of the most timid.

THERE is a great difference between being in the world, and having the world in us. Let a ship be in the water and it is all right, but let the water be in the ship and down she goes.

THE race of mankind would perish did they cease to help each other. We cannot exist without mutual help. All therefore that need aid have a right to ask it from their fellowmen, and no one who has the power of granting it can refuse without guilt.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SUCCOFASH.—Equal quantity of fresh shelled lima or string beans and corn cut from the cob. First cut your corn off and place the cobs in a pot with the beans. Cover all well with cold water and boil half an hour. Now remove the cobs and pour in your corn and boil twenty minutes longer. Add a lump of butter the size of a hen's egg, rolled in flour, quarter of a cup of milk, salt, sugar and pepper to taste.

SYRUPS FOR ICED DRINKS.—One pound sugar, one breakfast cup water, one ounce citric acid, flavour with lemon essence. Boil sugar and water, add the acid and flavour, and boil a few minutes longer—say quarter of an hour in all. Should be boiled in a porcelain lined pan, as the acid draws a bad taste from an iron or tin one. Citric acid is better for the stomach than tartaric acid. Colour this with a little burned sugar or saffron. Strawberry syrup is made the same; flavoured with strawberry essence; and coloured a beautiful red colour with a little cochineal or carmine. The above is a good proportion, and any quantity can be made at a time.

STEWED CHICKEN.—Clean and wash a nice, fresh, stewing chicken; cut it up as for frying and put it in a soup pot with enough boiling water to cover it; add one teaspoonful of salt and one teaspoonful of pepper; set it to boil very gently; take off all scum as it rises. When the chicken is tender add one-fourth can of mushrooms, one cup of sweet milk, one stalk of celery, cut into small pieces a bunch of parsley and one tablespoonful of butter and one tablespoonful of flour, worked together; now add noodles or dumplings, which have been boiled in salted water until tender; and just before removing from the fire, add one dozen large, fat oysters (when in season). When they are plumped up, dish and serve immediately.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE toll on an ordinary ship passing through the Suez Canal averages about £800. The distance is ninety-two miles.

THE only two great European capitals that never have been occupied by a foreign foe are London and St. Petersburg.

IN Japan poor children have labels, with their names and addresses, hung around their necks, as a safeguard against being lost.

COCO is Spanish for bogie, and it is said the coconut was thus named for its resemblance to a distorted human face.

LIZARDS crawl along the walls of the habitations in the Philippines, disregarded by the human occupants, and make themselves useful by catching flies and mosquitoes.

THE wild horses of Arabia will not admit a tame horse among them, while the wild horses of South America endeavour to decoy domesticated horses from their masters and seem eager to welcome them.

THE horse has a smaller stomach proportionally than other animals, because the horse was created for speed. Had he the ruminating stomach of the ox, he would be quite unfitted for the labour which he now performs.

THE original home of leprosy is Asia, and it flourishes there more than in any other part of the globe. China is a hotbed of leprosy; in Japan it prevails extensively, while in India it is known that there are at least some 130,000 lepers.

A FRENCH naturalist says that if the world became birdless, man could not inhabit it after nine years' time. In spite of all the sprays and poisons that could be manufactured for the destruction of insects, the bugs and slugs would simply eat up orchards and crops.

THE nationality of occupations is curious. The Italians will be found everywhere as restaurant-keepers and musicians, the French as cooks and milliners, the Greek Jews as manufacturers of cigarettes, and the German is easily "prince" of waiters.

CHINA still has the old fashioned system of private letter-carrying. Letter shops are to be found in every town. If he has a letter to send, the Chinaman goes to a letter-shop and bargains with the keeper thereof. He pays two-thirds of the cost, leaving the receiver to pay the rest on delivery.

THE terror inspired by the Japanese armies in the East is greatly enhanced by the fact that they make no noise. They march with no bands, no drums beat *adieu* or tattoo, and in action the Japanese utter no cheers. The officers have a code of signals by whistling that serves to direct the movement of the troops.

A FRENCH physician has invented an improved cradle-incubator for delicate babies. This consists of a neat tinued-copper cradle, beneath which is a boiler or water-bath and a kerosene lamp, the cradle or incubation-chamber being closed by a movable glass plate, and containing a wire-gauze bed, a moistening sponge, and a thermometer.

EIGHT miles due east, over the mountains from Oatcor Station, on the Mexican National Railway, is the city of that name, a city along whose steep, winding streets no wheeled vehicle was ever known to pass, although it has often boasted of a population of forty thousand. The city takes its name from once being the stronghold and property of a band of fourteen of the most desperate and successful robbers that ever laid tribute on the roads in Mexico.

SIXTY years ago there was a craze for the cactus, only rivalled by the tulip mania of history. It thrives on the stony, arid plains of California. The plant that will furnish you with a toothpick or a pint of water; that has no leaves and yet sometimes weighs a ton; that can live without moisture and blooms in the night; that sometimes is seventy feet high and again measures a couple of inches—surely the cactus is entitled to be called the wonder of all the growing things on earth.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAGNA.—No public institution of the sort exists.
B. O. D.—The court's order must be strictly obeyed.
CRIBIO.—It appears to be a token; take it to some dealer.

FLAT.—You may sub-let unless you have agreed not to do so.

G. R.—Saffron-hill and thereabouts would be the most likely locality.

WILLY NILLY.—There are several; give an order to your bookseller.

LOWER ORDER.—The family name of the Earls of Rosbery is Primrose.

FIG.—An octocolor is the offspring of a quadroon and a white person—one-eighth negro blood.

SUSIE.—A domestic servant may give notice at any time, and may be given notice at any time.

DOUBTFUL.—A present to a gentleman must depend upon his tastes and the state of your finances.

HOLLYHOCK.—It is believed that the hollyhock was brought to Europe from China, as early as the year 1678.

JOE.—We must refer you to a dealer in old coins. It is impossible to identify a rare coin from a general description.

FACELESS.—Washing the face with sour buttermilk is said to remove freckles or a little lemon juice applied in a similar manner.

I. O. U.—If the debt has not been acknowledged within the last six years, the recovery is barred by the Statute of Limitations.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—A marriage ceremony performed under assumed names is as legal and binding as if the real names are employed.

F. T.—One paper would do as well as another. Your best course would be to refrain from advertising until after arrival in the colony.

MOLLIE.—You should at once end the connection; state your reason for doing so, and avoid again placing yourself in a similar position.

ONE OF THE QUEEN'S NAVY.—H.M.S. *Pictoria* was rammed and sunk in the Mediterranean by H.M.S. *Camperdown*, on June 22nd, 1898.

SALLIE.—Soaking in vinegar and water will improve the colour. Then rinse in coffee, and iron while damp with a piece of flannel laid over it.

POLICE PERKINS.—No, it is not proper for you to commence a correspondence with an absent gentleman, with whom you are so slightly acquainted.

JEWEL OF ASIA.—Sardine, or sardina, is a precious stone, blood-red, so called from the city of Sardis, in Lesser Asia where the best were found.

BUBBLY BAR.—Soda should be used to wash everything that is greasy. The alkali causes the grease to turn into soap, which does the work of cleansing.

B. J.—Anything we should advise would probably remove the colour as well as the stains; the nature of either could hardly be judged without seeing them.

HARPER.—A man goes to a garden-party in a frock coat and tail hat if the party is given in London or near it. In the country a different style of dress is allowable.

O. R. W.—Write to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, E.W., who will at once give full information, with date of next examination.

RENIE.—Make a few small muslin bags, and put a little piece of camphor in each; then pin them where the smell of the camphor will reach the parts you want to protect.

AFFLICTION.—If your wife refuses to live with you, without good reason, you cannot be required to contribute to her support, unless she becomes chargeable to the parish.

LITTLE HOCKWICK.—Carbolic acid is an excellent and cheap disinfectant. A solution of it should be poured down all sinks and drains once every week or fortnight during hot weather.

D. C. M.—There is, or was, a brass nose over the gate of Brasenose College, Oxford; but the name (according to Brewer) is really a corruption of "brass-nose," a brew-house.

CHIEF.—There is no particular etiquette in the matter of mourning. People please themselves nowadays as to how long they shall wear the outward token of grief, or whether they shall do so at all.

BRITISHER.—The church as by law established in Scotland is the Presbyterian Church; it was against the attempt to establish Episcopalianism that the Covenanters successfully strove.

ROBERTO.—Give all the time you can spare to the acquisition of useful knowledge. Read biographies of "self-made" men first; these will show you useful examples and models for imitation.

ECONOMY.—As soon as your sheets begin to get thin, slit them down the centre and turn the sides to the middle, sewing them together. Hem the sides, cutting off a strip if the linen is almost in a hole, and the sheets will wear almost as long again.

AMBITIOUS.—There are a number of retired actors and actresses who prepare young persons for the stage. To secure the services of such you should read advertisements in the leading dramatic papers.

ROSE.—It should be washed in water and vinegar, equal parts, using a flannel rag, and then, after perfect drying, rubbed with a clean flannel, and a little linseed oil before using any liquid or crease polish.

TOPSY.—Put a piece of blotting paper over the spot and then lay a hot smoothing iron upon it. The paper will absorb the grease, and the little dust which remains may be removed with soap and water.

ANTACA.—The climate of British Central Africa is exceedingly trying to Europeans, and except upon advice of a medical man, we do not think you should venture to go there, especially for a lengthened term.

GREEN DICK.—The hairs can be removed one by one in the method you describe. The process is not dangerous, but is very painful. We do not know the actual cost, but understand that it is very expensive.

INDIGNATION.—"Finding" a dog does not give you the ownership of it, however many times you advertise the fact; and the true owner may reclaim it at any time. If you detain it, this is at your own risk and expense.

NON-WEATHERWISE.—A rosy sky at sunset presages fine weather; a red sky in the morning, bad weather or much wind, perhaps rain; a grey sky in the morning, fine weather; a high dawn, wind; a low dawn, fair weather.

JENNIE.—We think that more satisfaction is got out of good hair-cloth covering than from any other; leather, if of best quality, does very well, but once it is worn a little there is difficulty in renewing it again; good plush is for wear perhaps next to hair-cloth.

LOVE'S CHARM.

Love, you have charmed me with that red-gold hair
 That shone as though the sun in wanton play
 Had kissed its tresses, and behind him there
 An all too willing, prisoned sunbeam stray
 Had left, amid those locks to riot run,
 Sparkling and dancing like a little sun.

Love, you have charmed me with those tender eyes,
 In varying moods, now thoughtful and now sad,
 And now a gleam with mirth. How I would prize
 One look to warm my heart and make me glad;
 One look to tell me, Love, you would be mine;
 Though all the world forbade—as I am thine.

Love, you have charmed me with that gentle tone,
 Chiming so silvery, like some sweet bell
 Across the sea at sunset; as alone
 My light boat skirts the bosom of the well,
 And but the water's wash, the mincester's call,
 Sound sweetly—through the stillness over all.

Yes, you have charmed me, and the witching spell
 You threw around me, though it brought me pain,
 Yet have I learned to love it far too well
 Ever to wish that I were free again;
 And sometimes, in an all too fleeting dream,
 Joyous, I live a life that might have been.

A. L.—It can be done by opening the windows wide, and hanging wet cloths before them; from time to time these may be watered with a garden watering-pot from the top or upper windows, if you have them, or from a ladder.

GERALD.—The general opinion is that the sense of taste is absent in fish, and it is supposed that fish are guided in the selection or rejection of food by sight and the sense of smell alone. The same remark applies to every kind of reptile, and perhaps to the majority of birds.

A. B.—If he has not heard of his wife's existence for seven years, and he has reason to believe that she is dead, he may marry again without the risk of being prosecuted for bigamy. The second marriage will be void, however, if the first wife should prove to have been alive when it was contracted.

C. R.—The post is one calling for some little knowledge of bookkeeping and storing, also good address, because the individual usually has to receive and discharge the passengers. Application must be made to owners or superintendents, and influence is usually necessary.

PURLED.—Platonism means pertaining to Plato (who was a philosopher), or to his school or his opinion. Therefore, a platonic love indicates a pure, spiritual affection subsisting between the sexes, untrammelled by carnal desires, and regarding the mind only and its excellencies.

L. S.—To call a man a liar in a general sense—that is to suggest that he is a person of easy conscience—is not libellous; but to call him a liar with a particular reference—that is, to assert he either did or did not do or say something that involved dishonesty or criminality in another form—is distinctly actionable.

NELLIE.—To remove dandruff apply the following lotion once a day until cured: Chloral hydrate, one drachm; glycerine, four drachms; bay rum, eight ounces. Shake well before applying, and avoid rough usage with brush and comb. Bay rum or slightly diluted alcohol will have the same effect on your hair, after the dandruff has been removed. Once every two or three weeks is quite enough to shampoo the hair.

LOYALIST.—Queen Victoria has had nine children, Victoria, now Dowager Empress of Germany, born in 1840; Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, born in 1841; Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, born in 1843, and died in 1878; Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, born in 1844; Princess Helena, born in 1846; Princess Louise, born in 1848; Arthur, Duke of Connaught, born in 1850; Leopold, Duke of Albany, born in 1853, and died in 1884; Princess Beatrice, born in 1857.

MARY.—For the inside, mix together two cups of sugar, one cup of water and one and a half tablespoonfuls of arrowroot. Let them boil from five to eight minutes, stirring constantly. After removing from the fire, stir the mixture until it comes to a cream. When nearly smooth add one teaspoonful extract of vanilla and form the cream into balls. For the outside, melt half a pound of sweet chocolate, without adding any water, and roll the cream balls in it while it is warm.

F. D.—To one quart of warm milk add a tablespoonful of rennet, and stand it by the fire until it becomes a thick curd. Strain and press out all the whey. Put the curd into a pan or basin, and rub it quite smooth; add four ounces each of fresh butter and castor sugar, and two eggs well beaten. Mix the whole well, and add a little grated nutmeg, a few drops of essence of lemon, and a few currants. A stale sponge cake rubbed fine into the above is considered an improvement. Now take some puff paste, cut a long strip, one inch wide and half an inch thick. Cut in squares, and roll out so as to cover a small tartlet pan. Trim the spare paste neatly off the edges of the pans after it is put on them, or have a cutter the exact size of the edge of the pan, which will save that trouble. Fill in the curd, covering the whole of the paste to the very edge. Sift a little sugar over the cakes, and bake in a moderate oven.

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